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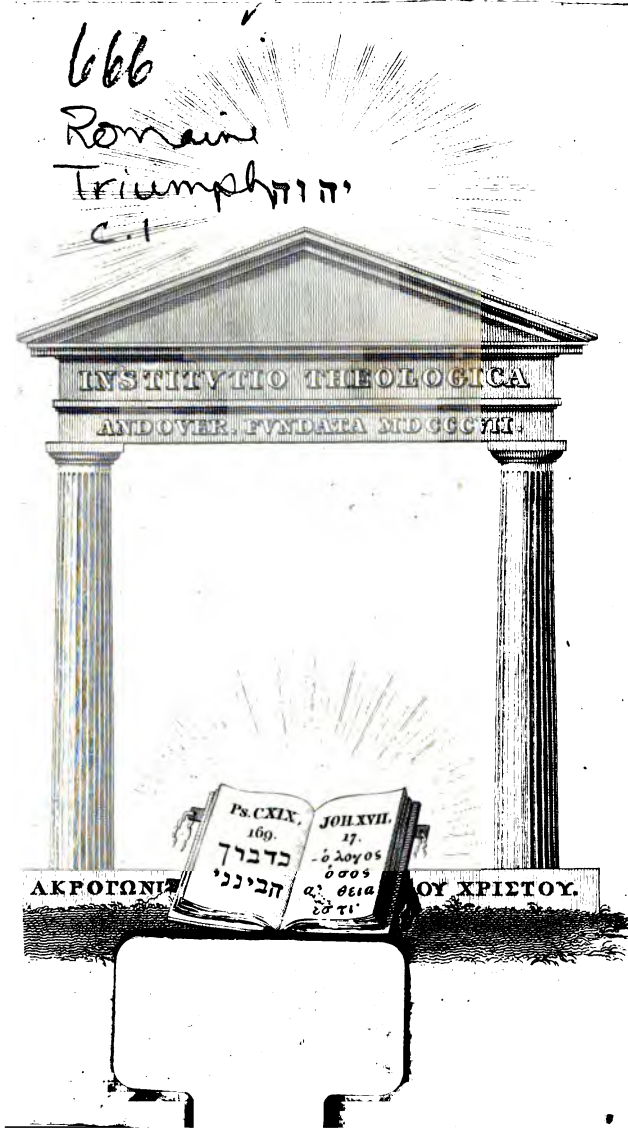

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THE

TRIUMPH OF FAITH:

BY THE LATE

Rev. WILLIAM ROMAINE, A. M.

Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ.—2 Cor. ii. 14.

FROM THE LATEST LONDON EDITION.

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PREFACE.

THE present treatise is a continuation of some remarks formerly published concerning the experience of a true Christian, who, quickened by the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, lives by faith, and who is enabled to go forward in his walk by the faith of the Son of God. There was one volume upon this subject, entitled, The Life of Faith, and some years after, two volumes on The Walk of Faith: In which the divine helps and supports were considered, great and many, not only for the establishment of believers in the way, but also for their happiness every step of it, that they might rejoice in the Lord always, yea, with such a fulness of joy, as to make them triumph in the God of their salvation.

This is the grand gospel privilege, which is granted to believers, as believers, and pro-

mised to them in the freest and fullest manner that any grant can be conveyed, springing from sovereign grace in the giver, and received not from any qualification in themselves, but entirely from his own bounty, continued and increased with all the rich and ripe fruits of faith to the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

It has been long observed, and much lamented, that there are very few of these happy believers, who give such a perfect credit to the promises of God in Christ, as to rest their hearts upon his faithfulness without any doubt or wavering: They do not trust so far as the promises warrant them, which stops the exercise of faith, and hinders the growth of the Spiritual life. Weak faith has little fruit. Strong faith improves love to God, loving obedience, patient suffering, persevering warfare, and the other fruits of the Spirit. Indeed for this very purpose it is commanded, that we might trust and not be afraid; and there are promises made to them who obey the command, and all things promised are possible to them who believe. For there is strength

sufficient in the promiser to make faith grow, yea, to make it grow exceedingly: and he has done it, giving us a happy instance in the church of the Thessalonians, in which persecution raged, but faith was victorious, and patience triumphant. It has pleased God to give us in the scriptures many encouragements for the growth of faith, which are in the following treatise set before the reader; that we may honour his word, and trust in it at all times, especially when appearances make against their being fulfilled. Then it is high worship, against hope to believe in hope, as the father of the faithful did: and they are his children, and follow the steps of his faith, who, when sin is felt in its defilement, in its guilt, in the sense of inward corruptions, and of strong temptations, in the many troubles of life, in the infirmities of age, and in the approach of death, put their whole trust and confidence in the promises of God. Nothing else is appointed, either to bring in the peace of God to the conscience, or to keep it in. God only in such trials can be a safe refuge, and a

sure defence; and faith, looking at what he has engaged to give, secures the promised help to the glory of God. Under these several heads something is here offered from the scriptures of truth to encourage a more steadfast reliance on the divine faithfulness, than one commonly meets with. And what is said upon each head is here set before the reader, on the authority of God's word, and is also followed with fervent prayer, that the end of publishing this treatise may be answered, even, that the srciptural faith may be hereby increased, that it may abound yet more and more, and in such a great degree, as may bring the highest glory to God, the truest holiness to the heart, and the happiest experience in the life, and in the warfare of the Christian. May the gracious Lord, who is the author and finisher of the faith, accompany it with his Spirit to the advancement of his own praise, and to the edification of his own people. To him who keepeth promise for ever, be glory in the church, through Christ Jesus, world without end. Amen.

THE

TRIUMPH, &c.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE there has been war, a triumph supposes a battle to have been fought, a victory to have been obtained, and the great rejoicings of the conquerors upon this occasion. The Christian has his matter of triumph, but it is spiritual. It is always in Christ, the captain of his salvation. So it is written—"Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." The apostle is speaking of his preaching the gospel. He carried the sweet savour of Jesus' name from place to place; but it was not always received as a joyful sound, nor welcomed as it deserved. He met with great opposition. The Holy Ghost witnessed that in every city, bonds and afflictions awaited him. As these abounded, grace did much more abound. For he was carried on through

persecutions, imprisonment, stoning, whipping, perils of various kinds, suffered for Christ, and Christ made him victorious over them all. He not only enabled Paul to conquer, but also made him more than conqueror: he was the blessed instrument of pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan, and of setting up in the world that kingdom of Jesus, which is flourishing to this day, and which will triumph to eternity. A poor weak man had all the Roman empire against him, but he did wonders. Through Christ strengthening him, he went on conquering and to conquer: and to Christ he gives all the glory; acknowledging that the gospel, his preaching it, and the success of it, was of God, the excellency of the power was of God. "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." He, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate, that as our surety he might live, and die and conquer for us. It was to the everlasting honour of his grace and mercy, that he would engage in this war, and undertake to deliver

his people from the tyranny of their enemies. They were in bondage to sin—sold under sin—enslaved to divers lusts and pleasures —living according to the course of this world—according to the prince of the power of the air, the wicked spirit, who now worketh effectually in the children of disobedience. These tyrants were leading them captive at their will, hoping soon to have them delivered over to death, and then to everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. In this miserable state, under sin—under condemnation, we all were—guilty and helpless—not only without any means of deliverance in our own power, but without any desire of it, being tempted to dream of liberty, while we were tied and bound with the chain of our sins, and fancying that we were free, even while our enemies were waiting to exercise their utmost malice against us, by binding us with chains of everlasting darkness. O! what mercies—what compassions are in our God—in our Jesus! He remembered us in this our low estate, and manifest-

ed the exceeding riches of his grace, in coming from heaven to save his people from their sins. To this end Jehovah was manifested in the flesh, as it is written, Jer. l. 33, 34. "The children of Israel, and the children of Judah were oppressed together, and all that took them captives held them fast, and refused to let them go: But their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name, he shall thoroughly plead their cause." He made all our enemies his own, and fought our battles against them. He obeyed, that the broken law which stood against us might be magnified by his obedience: The penalties of it he endured, when the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all. His cross was his triumphal chariot, on which he vanquished all our foes, Col. ii. 14, 15. He blotted out the hand writing of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in that same cross. By dying on it he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and by his rising

from the dead on the third day, according to the scriptures, he overcame death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil. And now as God-man in one Christ, the almighty Saviour of his redeemed, he is seated upon his throne of grace, all his enemies being made his foot-stool, he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Such was the battle which the Redeemer fought. Such was the victory which he obtained. The important news of it is the substance of that blessed gospel, which he ordered his apostles to preach to every creature, and which he promised to assist them in, and to be with them for that purpose to the end of the world. He is as good as his word to this day. Still faith cometh by hearing it. The Holy Spirit witnesses to it, that it is the truth of God, and he applies it, and makes it the power of God unto salvation. He enables the hearers to mix such faith with it that they receive, and enjoy the happy fruits of Christ's victory. Once they were dead in trespasses and sins, but now Christ hath quickened them. They were guilty, and

bound over to condemnation; but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed them from the law of sin and of death. Once they walked after the course of this world, but now they walk with God. Their old enemies are still fighting against them, and watching for their destruction; but they are enabled to gain daily victory over them, over the world, the flesh, and the devil, through the strength of Jesus, and through the power of his might. Their wants are many, and they are daily made more sensible of them; but they have an abundant supply of every thing that pertains to life and godliness, out of the infinite fulness of God, their Saviour.

Thus far the three volumes went, which were formerly published upon this subject, entitled, *The Life of Faith*, and *The Walk of Faith*. The present treatise relates to the improvement of the former doctrines, considering the scripture motives and encouragements for believer's rejoicing always in the Lord, and triumphing in the God of his salvation. The ground of his triumph is the work of Christ. His warrant to depend upon

it, is the word of Christ: and his actual dependence is the work of the Spirit of Christ. Building upon these principles, he is commanded to go on from faith to faith, still pressing forward that he may see more clearly the glory of the person, and the glory of the work of Christ; what he is to trust in for his title to salvation, and for the things which accompany salvation, and may by every day's experience be growing into a more settled dependence upon the word of Christ, and upon his faithfulness to fulfil it: and thereby may be learning to expect constant supplies, and according as his faith increases receiving greater supplies of the power of the Spirit of Christ: that the God of hope may fill him with all joy and peace in believing, that he may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. And we have an encouraging example in the Thessalonians who had great trials, and met them with great faith. The apostle commended it highly, but by practice it had so improved, that having occasion to mention it some time afterwards,

he says—" We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly." We have the same promises, and the same helps, as they had—promises exceeding great and exeeding precious, containing a free grant in Christ of all spiritual blessings—a full warrant to make use of them for life and godliness, with commands and encouragements to trust and not be afraid of any enemies, or of any dangers: Because he is faithful who has promised to be with them—to guide them with his counsel—to keep them safe by his power—to bless them with his love—and never to leave them nor forsake them: so that in all difficulties and troubles, they may go on their way rejoicing, until faith and patience have done their perfect work. To this purpose, a Divine, whose praise is in all the churches, has given his testimony: " It is an everlasting spring of comfort, and encouragement unto the people of God, both in prayer, and unto prayer; they pray to him, who is mighty, mighty to do what they pray for. The Lord's promises are our richest

inheritances, and that not only because he hath promised greater and better things than are in the compass of any man's power to make good, or in the compass of any man's understanding to comprehend; but because he will certainly be as good in performance, as he hath been in promise: for he is in one mind concerning all that he hath promised. He will be merciful as he hath promised, and pardon sin, as he hath promised, and sanctify all our troubles, as he hath promised; he will give us his Spirit, as he hath promised, and save us eternally, as he hath promised." A great Layman thus confirms the same truth—"Were God but believed in what he says, all the temptations of Satan, and the doubtings of our unbelieving hearts, would be silenced and brought to nothing. What exceeding folly is it in our hearts, that God, who never deceived any that trusted in him, should be distrusted by any, and not believed by all. He is the God of truth: so is his word the word of truth. And not any soul, that ever tried God by trusting him upon his word, but found him so. Oh! then take

God's word, and our hearts will be quiet. Though the heathen do rage, yet they imagine but a vain thing. In this glorious doctrine, free grace in God is the fountain, full satisfaction to divine justice the way, but perfect salvation and redemption to all his elect body in Christ, the end. And truly when a soul can say, My Beloved is mine, and I am his, he hath spoken all at once. I know no other light nor rule, but the word and Spirit to make out any thing of God to any soul. The glory of the great day will be—God is mine, and I am his."

CHAP. II.

Some scripture encouragements for the triumph of faith.

ALL the old testament words which we translate triumph, signify great joy felt in the heart, and expressed outwardly in word or deed; a jubilee of joy, even joy in the highest, as near as it can be to the joy of heaven. In the new testament the word is used but twice: First, for what Christ engaged to do for us, and secondly for what Christ engaged to do in us. For us he undertook to fight our battles against all our enemies—sin, the world, Satan, death and hell. And the Captain of our salvation has gained a complete victory, and had a most glorious triumph over them in his own person—when he blotted out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them

openly, triumphing over them in that same cross. And he still goes on conquering and to conquer. By the preaching of his cross and passion, his resurrection and ascension, he is to this very day exalting the honours of his victory and triumph in the hearts and lives of his redeemed, giving them such a share in his conquests, that they ought to be ever praising him with joyful lips. Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ. This was the apostle's happy experience. He found that the gospel, and his preaching of it, and the great success which attended it, were the fruits of Christ's presence with him, and blessing upon him: Therefore to him he gave all the glory. So do we still. We see the triumphs of the cross spread far and wide, and we praise him for our day of gospel grace. The crucified Saviour in his majesty rides on prosperously in the chariots of salvation, and his enemies fall under him. In the day of his power he makes them a willing people. They submit to his sceptre, and acknowledge him to be their Lord and their God. Under his banner they

fight the good fight of faith, and they daily conquer, yea, they are more than conquerors through him who loveth them, crowned conquerors in glory everlasting. Thus it appears that the triumph of the Head includes the triumph of his members. The fountain from whence springs their present and their eternal joy, is God—God in Christ. They glory in the victories of the God-man: because of his commandment; because of his free-promise, which is a perfect warrant for the fullest confidence: and because of his goodness, truth, and power, which are bound to fulfil all his engagements. Looking to these infallible securities, the believer's heart is established, trusting in the Lord. Being of the true circumcision, he would put no confidence in the flesh, but would be daily crucifying it with its affections and lusts, and bringing all high thoughts of self to the obedience of Christ. If he has been long standing in the faith—an old christian—if he has received much consolation from his Lord—or has been very active and successful in his service; his trust is never in himself. The ground of his

believing is always one and the same. He has no new doctrine to learn: no new warrant to encourage him to believe. The word of God—thus saith the Lord, is always sufficient: and ought to draw forth the fullest credit, that can possibly be given to the testimony of the God of truth. What was advanced before in the *Life of Faith*, and in the *Walk of Faith*, is taken for granted in the present treatise. Here is no new doctrine. Salvation is in Christ Jesus, and in no other. I am, says he, *the truth*, the one saving truth, like himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. One Lord, one faith, one salvation. And whoever believes this aright is in a safe state, in which there is no change with respect to God; no variableness, or shadow of turning. Whatever his own apprehensions may be, the word of the Lord endureth for ever. He may be tempted in a legal hour to cast away his confidence, but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. He may change, but I, saith God, change not. For the gracious gifts and calling of God are without repentance—they are such that

it cannot repent him of bestowing them, or of continuing them, when once bestowed. As the believer has no new truth to learn, only to improve the principles of the doctrine of Christ; so he has no new title to expect. Under the free grant and gift of God, salvation comes to him of grace, in the most sovereign way that can be conceived. And his warrant to receive it is the divine command; and when he has been enabled to receive it by the obedience of faith, the divine promise assures him, that he shall not perish for his sins, but that he shall have everlasting life. Believing the promise is the best title that possibly can be to this salvation; for we are saved freely by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, neither salvation nor faith; both are the gifts of God. And under the title all the blessings which accompany salvation are included, all the things which are freely given to us of God—a sufficiency of present grace, and the full possession of eternal glory. This is the good old foundation, upon which the heirs of promise have always built their faith and

hope. They knew, that all fulness was in Christ for their use and enjoyment: and they were persuaded, that they should honour him most, by believing this with the strongest certainty. They could not trust too soon, nor too much, to his faithfulness. And therefore they come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may receive out of his fulness at all times, for all things, for body and soul, for earth and heaven, what they wanted, and what he had promised. The more they live thus by faith, they will experience more occasion to rejoice in the Lord: and to find that his arm to fulfil will always go as far as his promise, even to bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. This indeed is strong faith, but it is the gift of a strong God: it does not depend, in the least, on what the believer can do for himself, but on what the almighty has engaged to do for him, and in him, and by him: for he requires and commands it in this high degree. There is grace sufficient to bring it into use

and practice, as far as the commands go; all things promised being possible to him that believeth. And they who have trusted most to the faithfulness of God, who against hope believed in hope, have experienced that God did never leave them nor forsake them. He magnified his word above all his name. There he has made his name to shine forth, and all his attributes are magnified in their greatest perfection. The believers on earth, and the saints in heaven, praise God for his word: because it is the instrument of his Spirit, by which he bestows grace, and according to which, he gives glory. The fulfilling of his word runs through time, and will run through eternity. Blessed be God for his word of promise: Blessed be the Lord, that it will be fulfilling for ever and ever. This being the case, it becomes necessary to inquire into the divine records, and to see what a full warrant God has given us to trust and not be afraid: and this to every believer, there being the same ground to believe with the strongest faith, as to believe at all.

This inquiry is the more necessary, because of the place which faith holds in our religion. It reaches to the whole of it: so that nothing is good before God, however fair and specious it may appear to men, without it. The conscience, the heart, and its affections, are purified only by faith. All duties, for their right motive, and for their acceptance, depend upon it. Without faith it is impossible to please God. No trials and afflictions can be patiently and profitably endured, unless faith be in exercise. Our whole warfare is carried on, and canbe, by our being strong in the Lord, and fighting in the power of his might, and finished victoriously only by faith. Indeed it enters so much into every thing wherein we have to do with God, that the strengthening of it is the strengthening of every other grace; which are weak or vigorous according as more or less faith enters into them. And therefore the scripture encouragements for our growth in faith should be well weighed with much prayer, frequent meditation, and thanksgiving, that they may have their proper effect upon the believer's

heart and life. And as this can be done only by power from on high; assistance must ever be sought from thence, and depended upon. The Holy Spirit is the very breath of spiritual life, and of all spiritual activity. Every godly motion of the heart is from his holy inspiration. So the scripture teaches: 2 Cor. iii. 5. "Not that we (even apostles) are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." So we are taught to pray: O Lord, from whom all good things do come, grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Fifth Sunday after Easter, and again, the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. O God! forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A great Divine has thus expressed the same sentiments.

"In those who are truly converted, all saving truths are transcribed out of the scripture into their hearts. They are taught of God; so as they find all truths, both concerning the estate, and the gracious and happy estate of man, in themselves. They carry a body of divinity in them, and about them; so as from a saving feeling they can speak of conversion, of grace, of the Spirit, &c. and from this acquaintance are ready to yield and give up themselves to truth revealed, and to God speaking by it. And thus a man may know his estate before God, by his relish for the word. There is a heavenly and divine relish in the word of God; as for instance—Take the doctrine of his providence, that all things shall work together for the best to them that love God; What a sweet word is this! A whole kingdom is not worth this promise—That whatever befals a Christian in this world, there is an overruling Providence to sway all to good, to help forward his eternal good—that Christ will be present with us in all conditions—that he will give us his Holy Spirit—that when we confess our

sins, and lay them open, he is merciful to forgive them—that if our sins were red as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool. What kind of incredible sweetness is in these to a heart that is prepared for these comforts? The doctrines of reconciliation, of adoption, of glory to come, of the offices of Christ, and such like; how sweet are they? They relish wonderfully to a sanctified soul. These truths that come out of the mouth of Christ, and out of the ministry concerning Christ, they are most sweet of all. Oh how sweet were these words to the poor man—*Thy sins are forgiven thee.* Do you think they went not to his heart? The best discovery of a true affection to Christ, and of a true state in grace, is from our affection to the word of Christ. Wherever there is an interest in Christ, there is an high respect to the word."

A believer trusting to these helps, and making a diligent use of these means, in reading the charter of grace, will find such a faith frequently described and required, as relies on the truth of God without doubt or

wavering, as depends on his faithfulness to his promises, with the fullest confidence of the heart, and waits on his fufilling them, steadfastly persuaded that he has spoken nothing with his mouth but what he will infallibly make good with his arm.

All the gifts and graces of God come to us in his promises, and cannot be received or enjoyed but in the way of believing. What then can be a greater encouragement not to stagger at any promise through unbelief, than that God has declared it is a service well pleasing and acceptable to him. It is high worship to be strong in faith, giving glory to God: for it is a gift of his love, and a grace of his Spirit, and his own special work in the hearts of his people. In the day of his power he makes them willing, and he enables them to set to their seal, that God is true. So we read—"by faith in Christ, Enoch walked with God, and he had this testimony, that he pleased God, but without this faith it is impossible to please him:" Therefore Enoch's state, and his walk, and his translation, were all by faith. Now we know,

that the judgement of God is according to truth, and he has declared in the word of truth, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So that it is impossible it should please a most holy God; who has magnified his word above all his name, and who delights to see his people do the same; magnifying it, by giving it the fullest credit of their hearts, and the most perfect dependence of their lives.

He has also required this by his express command: This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, who has said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," with the same faith, and with the same worship: and when the jailor inquired of Paul and Silas, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? they answered—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And this belief is commanded in very trying circumstances, when the outward supports of faith seem to fail, and the inward comforts are at a very low ebb: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that

walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God,"—his God still. That relation is always the same; and so are the blessings which are included in it, and which he cannot fail to bestow upon them who honour his word in such trials of their faith, that against hope they believe in hope: for blessed are all they who put their trust in him.

For the farther confirmation of their faith, he has strengthened his commands, with the most encouraging promises of grace to help in every time of need. Ask and ye shall have: for he giveth to all askers liberally, and upbraideth not, come they ever so often, or ask ever so much: yea, our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; and his influence goes as far as any promise, for he is the mighty power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Whatever is promised, he is almighty to fulfil. So we read when our Lord cursed the barren fig tree, the apostles marvelled, that it presently withered away. Jesus an-

swered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done; and all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive; for believing honours the truth of the promiser, and asking in prayer for the fulfilling of it, engages and secures the promised grace. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much; so much, that the prayer of faith has opened and shut heaven. It has done wonders in removing mountains of difficulties, and conquering hosts of foes, which rendered it seemingly impossible that the word of God should be established. But faith gained the victory, and triumphed gloriously.

It has pleased God also to confirm all these arguments, by revealing the motive on which he made the promises. It was love. They are all free grace promises. In his counsels, in the revealing them, in the fulfilling them, love directs the whole. They

are discoveries of what is in the Father's heart to his children, and are the means of conveying his fatherly blessings, especially such a persuasion of his love to them, as will work love to him, and they work by love. For we love him, because he first loved us: therefore he speaks to them comfortably, addressing himself to them in the tenderest compassion, and calling them by the dearest names—his chosen—his beloved—his adopted—his children—his friends—heirs, heirs of God—joint heirs with Christ, who is Lord of all—his peculiar treasure—his portion. These, and many other endearing names, are intended to convince them of his love, and to win, and engage their hearts in love to him; that when it is given them to believe the truth of his promises, they might be certain of their fulfilment. God is love: he delighteth in his people. His heart is so set upon them, that in his dealings with them, love has the appointing, the directing, and the blessing of all. His love to them had no beginning, and it will have no end. It bestows on the happy objects of it, grace,

and it secures to them glory. Love has crowned their Head. And love will crown all his members. For out of his fulness they are most freely invited to come and take all spiritual blessings, as the earnest of eternal. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon them! who can believe it, and not love him again?

It has pleased God also to give us some examples of his singular favour, to them who acted strong faith, and to whom he therefore administered strong consolation. The apostle says, "That whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." And then he prays, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost." And when the Holy Ghost gives it this blessed effect, he always fills the heart with gratitude and thankfulness. Thus it operated in the day when the believer was enabled to say, "O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine an-

ger is turned away, and thou hast comforted me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the fountain of salvation." O what reviving cordials did the father of the faithful draw out of it! who against hope believed in hope, that he should become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken: "So shall thy seed be: And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:" and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. For this heroic faith, he is celebrated in scripture, and proposed to us for an example. One of his children was enabled to follow close the steps of his faith, through a life of continual and great sufferings, and to triumph in the prospect of a violent death. "I am now ready to be offer-

ed up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing."

We have another example given us in the fifty-sixth Psalm. On whatever occasion the prophet indited it, the Spirit of prophecy teaches us to apply it to the Son of David, who is Christ the Lord. It describes his great trials, and continual persecutions, and his invisible faith, by which he was carried through them, when all the world was against him. The whole Psalm is a prayer made up of the most perfect trust and confidence in the faithfulness of God to his word; and he assures himself that heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot or tittle of it could fail. He had enemies many, mighty, cunning, cruel, united together to destroy him, Acts iv. 27. but his heart was established, trusting in the Lord. He read, he knew, he

believed the promises made to him, and, without doubt or wavering, he waited for the fulfilling of them. Thus he viewed the Father's covenant engagements, who had declared; "Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out, he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it: He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and I will hold thy hand, I will keep thee, and I will give thee for a covenant of the people," &c. On this rock he built his faith, and could not be moved. "The Lord God," says he, "hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting; for the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed: He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is

mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God will help me, who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up." What an undaunted courage is here manifested? In this spirit of faith, he prays—

"Be gracious unto me, O God, because fallen man would devour me: all the day long he is fighting against me, and oppressing me: all the day long mine enemies would devour me; for they are many who fight against me, O thou most high. In the day, when I might have reason to fear, I will put my trust in thee: I shall praise God because of his word: in God I have put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me: all the day long they torture my words: all their devices are against me for evil: they assemble together; they hide themselves: they watch my steps, as if they were waiting for my life. Shall they escape for their wickedness? In thine anger, O God, thou wilt bring these people under. Thou

numberest my wanderings; thou hast put my tears into thy bottle: are they not recorded in thy register? In the day when I shall pray unto thee, then shall mine enemies be driven back: this I have known for certain, because God is on my side. I will praise God, because of his word: I will praise Jehovah, because of his word: in God have I trusted, I will not fear what man can do unto me. Thy vows are upon me, O God. I will pay my thanksgivings unto thee: for thou hast delivered my life from death. Wilt thou not also keep my feet from falling that I may be able to walk in the presence of God, in the light of life everlasting?"

O what a perfect trust and confidence is this! and how loudly does it call upon us to look to his example, that God would give us grace to follow the steps of his faith. Observe, O my soul, and consider the pattern set before thee. He had God on his side—the promises—the power—the providences of the Almighty. He knew that every step was marked, every tear noticed, and that God had them in the book of his remem-

brance. In this faith he met his trials, and came off triumphant. Notwithstanding his many weary steps, and his strong crying and tears under that sorrow, which never had its like, yet he knew that he should be heard—and he was heard. His enemies fell before him: but they rose and returned to the combat. Upon the word he casts his anchor again. He trusts to it; and he finds it firm and sure still. The storm is great; it continues; it increases; all thy waves and storms, says he to his God, are gone over me. But, my soul, trust thou still in the Lord; for my hope is in him. His word is my stay. It cannot be broken. I praise him for it: again I praise him for it. Trusting in it, now my fears are gone. God is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me. O what a pattern is here set for us! May the meditation upon it be useful. May the gracious Lord, who is the author and the finisher of the faith, bless the means of his own appointing, for the strengthening of it. And in the use of them, looking up for the constant supplies of his Spirit, may he enable us to go

on from strength to strength, keeping this example always in view, until he bring us in peace unto the end of our faith.

These are some of the scripture grounds, upon which the Triumph of Faith is built. It stands upon the almighty power of God, as engaged to fulfil his word. For his word is his deed. To take him at his word is the proper exercise of faith. He hath promised, and it is done. To rest thus upon it, as what cannot possibly fail, is the foundation of Christian worship: and when it is established in the heart, in the love of the truth, it constitutes the chief of that service, which is perfect freedom: for God has declared himself well pleased with our trusting to his truth and faithfulness. He has commanded us to do it without doubt or wavering. He has promised grace sufficient to enable us thus to believe, and we cannot put too much trust and confidence in his arm and power. And he has also given us examples of those, who honoured him with the fullest reliance of their hearts, and had reason to rejoice in the Lord, who keepeth promise for ever.

Glory be to him for such encouragements of our faith. O that they may have their proper effect. May the Holy Ghost apply them by his grace, and give us such a faith as may be well pleasing unto God; such a faith as he has commanded, and for the full exercise of which he has made exceeding great promises. Help us, O God of all grace, to trust and not be afraid: for thou art faithful: thy word and thy promises give us full security to trust in the Lord at all times; because in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength: and blessed are all they who put their trust in him.

But by what ways and means shall these arguments and encouragements have their full effect? This is the main point, and it is settled beyond dispute upon scripture authority. The same Spirit, who revealed the promises, is also the fulfiller of them: and he is almighty. The blessing on the use of the means is entirely from him. It is he who teacheth man knowledge: and from him we are to seek it in prayer. With all

our reading, hearing, studying, meditating upon the scriptures, we must look up to him for his divine teaching. If any of you, believers, lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all askers liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him, but let him ask in faith. Here is a command and a promise. When we lack wisdom, which we always do, as much as we want breath, we are to ask it of the Spirit of wisdom, and it shall be given us. He will make us wise unto salvation. He will keep us in the use of means dependent on his leading us unto all useful truth, and of his revealing to us the things which are freely given to us of God, to show them to us as realities, and to put us into the enjoyment of them as blessings. In this dependence on him we live, and move, and have our being. Our spiritual life and faculties, and the exercise of them, and the improvement of them, are entirely from his influence. For the apostle, mentioning the several gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, says, " All these worketh that one, and the self-same Spirit, dividing to eve-

ry man his own gifts, according to his own will." To him then we are to look up for every good gift, and every perfect gift. Whenever we open the bible, we should ask his light and his teaching. He is the chief commentator. He only can put the scriptures into our inward parts, and write them upon our hearts, so that we may experience them to be the power of God unto our own salvation. Our first reformers were of this sentiment, exhorting us to pray, that by the holy inspiration of God's Spirit, we may think those things that be good, and by his merciful guiding, may perform the same. Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit to think, and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

As they prayed, so they sung: For we meet with two hymns, inserted by the reformers in the Common Prayer Book, appointed to be sung at the ordaining of priests,

and at the consecration of bishops. The first begins with these words—

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire, &c.

Out of the second I quote some verses, not for any excellency of the poetry, but for the soundness of the divinity expressed in these lines—

Come, Holy Ghost, eternal God,
Proceeding from above,
Both from the Father and the Son,
The God of peace and love.

Visit our minds, and into us
Thy heav'nly grace inspire,
That in all truth and godliness
We may have true desire.

Thou in thy gifts art manifold,
Whereby Christ's Church doth stand,
In faithful hearts writing thy law,
The finger of God's hand.

According to thy promise made,
Thou givest speech of grace,
That thro' thy help, the praise of God
May stand in every place.

O Holy Ghost, into our souls
Send down thy heavenly light,
Kindle our hearts with fervent love,
To serve God day and night.

Strengthen and stablish our weakness,
So feeble and so frail,
That neither devil, world, nor flesh,
Against us may prevail.

Grant us, O Lord, thro' thee to know
The Father most of might,
That of his dear beloved Son,
We may attain the sight.

And that with perfect faith also,
We may acknowledge thee,
The Spirit of them both always,
One God, in persons three.

From these authorities, it appears to be the doctrine of the scriptures, and of our reformers in harmony with them, That spiritual life, and knowledge, and faith in Christ, and hope in him that maketh not ashamed, and holy love, with every godly motion of the heart, come from the holy inspiration of God the Spirit. It is from him that we understand the scriptures, in the mind of the

Spirit: it is from his grace that we grow in scripture knowledge, and persevere in the use of means, and at the same time in a constant dependence on his presence in them, for the furtherance and joy of our faith. He begins, he carries on, and he perfects our learning in his revealed word and will. O that he may make us, and keep us good scholars, in an abiding sense of the necessity of his divine teaching: that the Spirit and the word may go together in our bible studies, and bible experience: so that this may be the daily prayer of our faith.

O thou Spirit of wisdom and revelation, who hast taught us that secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children for ever; open the eyes of our understanding to understand what is revealed in the scriptures for our use. Dispose us to hear them, read them, and meditate on them, with profit. And help us to mix more faith with them, that they may become more precious. In every day's reading, grant that we may find them to be the ingrafted word,

and that we are really branches grafted into the tree of life, and by the rain and shining of heaven, enabled to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit abundantly. For all these blessings keep us ever dependent on thy divine teaching, that our fruits may grow richer and riper—we may be more humble in our hearts, and more thankful in our lives; that so we, who can learn nothing as we ought without thee, may by thy grace be made wise unto eternal salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus—To whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Spirit, be equal honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

CHAP. III.

The believer's triumph in the Lord his righteousness.

THE object of his rejoicing is always one and the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness, or shadow of turning; it is Christ, God in Christ, concerning whom the commandment runs—Rejoice in the Lord Jesus always, and again, I say, rejoice; there being in him a fountain of joy springing up into everlasting life. What he is in his own wonderful person—what is revealed of his gracious works and ways in his dealings with the sinners of mankind—what he did for them in the days of his flesh—what he does in them by his Spirit in time—what he has promised to give them in eternity; in every possible view that can be taken of him, a believer may and ought to rejoice always, and that with a fulness of joy: for thus the apostle offers up his praise—"Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

For he has in his person every possible subject of triumphant joy. He is true and very God: and he is true and very man—God and man in one Christ. The prophet Isaiah foretold this marvellous union, and gloried in the prospect: For us men, and for our salvation, a child is born, and a son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, because the child is the mighty God, and the Son is the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. This is the great mystery of godliness, of which the Saints in the Old Testament sang with the sweetest melody, in their hearts unto the Lord, as the prophet does in the one hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, calling upon all in heaven and earth, with all their inhabitants, to join him in the praises of Immanuel: Because his Name alone is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth. So that New Testament saint felt it, who declared, that he accounted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,

and I do account them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him—found so united to him as to be one with him: for he was united to our nature, in order to bring about another most blessed union. He, taking our nature, that we might take his—He, made the Son of man, that we might be made the sons of God—He, having the power of an endless life, that he might give spiritual and eternal life to all believers! For they, in the day of his power, are joined to the Lord by one Spirit—the same Spirit in the members as in the head—that through him, their Head, they might be able to say, Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the bond of his Spirit. It is not possible for man to conceive higher things than our Lord has prayed for in these words: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me: and the glory which thou

gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one." By virtue of this union with Christ, who is the head over all things to the church, his members have fellowship with him in his holy life: He is the Lord Jehovah their righteousness: for them he became subject to the law, and obedient to its precepts, born of a woman, and made under the law, that through his obedience many might be made righteous. Lo! I come, says he, to DO thy will, O God! and he did it by fulfilling all righteousness. As the surety for his people, what he did, when he magnified the law, and made it infinitely honourable in all its demands, was for them, and for their justification, that it might be imputed unto them for righteousness, and they might be dealt with as righteous at the judgment seat of God. In this the father of the faithful made his boast, and gloried all the day long: for we read, that he believed in God, and God imputed to him for righteousness, loving him as his friend, and blessing him in all things. Now it was not written for his sake

alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: for the children of believing Abraham are freely made heirs, as he was, of the righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ. Hear one of them; with what heart felt-joy he celebrates his triumphant state in Christ! "I will hope continually, and I will praise thee more and more—my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof: I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine ONLY." He found the blessings flowing from it numberless, and endless: so that it was all he wanted for his justification to life, and for his title to glory—it ONLY. In the same Psalm, admiring and adoring the wonders of the gift of grace, he breaks out: "Thy righteousness, O God, is very high, who hast done great things; O God, who is like unto thee?" He was so complete in this righteousness of Christ, that he would mix

nothing with it for his free access to God, or for his full acceptance before God. He knew that this righteousness of faith was appointed of God, was the gift of his grace, and was all-sufficient, being an everlasting righteousness: and therefore it effectually removed the consciousness of sin from his heart, and enabled him to come boldly to the throne of grace, where he stood perfectly justified in Jesus. And in the same spirit we hear a New Testament saint resolving to exclude all glorying, except in Christ, and in his righteousness, "in whom God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of works? nay, but by the law of faith: therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law; and that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This was the apostle's highest ambition, to be found in his precious Saviour. O that I may rejoice in him through life, and may be found in

him at the hour of death, and at the day of judgment—found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Blessed testimony for Jesus!—encouraging example to place our whole trust and confidence in the Lord our righteousness, and our strength: for he is the same to us as he was to the apostle Paul, and we have as good reason to triumph as he had, because it is written, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and a bride adorneth herself with her jewels: for as the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." This is the righteousness of faith, and these are the fruits of it, which abound to the glory of God, even peace

with him, joy in him, a holy walk with him, and a victorious warfare by him. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. Herein to glory is the believer's bounden duty. He is called to it, as his gospel privilege, and according to his faith he does triumph in it, as his present happiness, and as a good ground for his hope of eternal joy. Wonderful blessings are promised to this faith and hope, and they are truly experienced at this day. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for his providing such a garment for glory and beauty. He has warranted thee to put it on, and having through it free access into his presence, he has commanded thee to join that great multitude, whom no one can number, who are standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands, and who cry with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever." Their robes are as white as the light, being washed clean in the blood of the Lamb, and through him they have conquered, as the

palms in their hands denote; yea, are more than conquerors, having crowns of righteousness upon their heads, which can never fade away. For grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. O what matter of triumph is here! a righteousness absolutely perfect, and everlasting! This greatly enhances all our high joys in Christ, that there is full security for their continuance. It depends on the faithfulness of God to his word and promise, fixed in his eternal counsels, and established upon immutable things. "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord, and mine is an everlasting righteousness. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." The state of a believer is always one and the same on God's part. He may vary in his apprehensions of his state, but with God there is no

variableness, or shadow of turning. He may be a believer walking in darkness—tempted to doubt, he may pay too much attention to sense and feeling—may get into a legal spirit—his evidences may be clouded—when outward things and providences seem to make against him, his faith may be sore tried, and he may stagger at the promises of God through some fit of unbelief—the man changeth, but God changeth not. His mercies are sure mercies. They cannot fail: For they spring from the ocean of grace, and are streams which no created power can cut off: but they shall infallibly return to it again, and shall bring with them all the happy objects of his love. The Father chose them, and gave them to his Son, who has all their names written in the Lamb's book of life. For them he lived and died; and when he presents them at the last day to the Father —"Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me," not one of them shall be wanting: for the Holy Spirit is by his office the Lord and giver of life to them, and in the day of his power he enables them to re-

ceive Jesus, and to live by faith upon him, as members united to, and in fellowship with their glorified Head. This covenant of the blessed Trinity is unalterable, being ordered in all things and sure. All the subjects of its grace shall infallibly be saved according to our Lord's promise, and according to our Lord's prayer, viz. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Trusting to these immutable securities the heirs of promise are commanded to draw strong consolation, even to rejoice in Jesus with a fulness of joy; in darkness as well as walking in light—in winter as well as in summer—in adversity as well as in prosperity—in death as well as in life; because he has all power in heaven and earth to make good to them every covenant engagement. And he will do it; for the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and shall come to Sion with Songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall

obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.

O thou most blessed God and Saviour, thou art the Lord our righteousness and our strength. I believe that the whole Israel of God shall be justified ONLY by thee, and in thee ONLY shall they glory. O let thy Spirit abide with me to increase in me this faith, that by fresh supplies of his grace I may be kept from going about to establish my own righteousness, and may constantly submit myself to the righteousness of God. And by the same grace help me to bring forth the fruits of righteousness abundantly unto the glory and praise of God; magnifying thine atonement in the peace of my conscience, exalting thy righteousness in the love of my heart, and in my walk and warfare glorifying thy fulness; so that out of it I may be receiving a sufficiency of grace, by which I am now enabled to bless thee for the hope of glory. To thee, almighty Jesus, for the work of righteousness, which is peace; and for the effect of righteousness, which is quietness and assurance for ever; to thee, be everlasting praise. Amen, and Amen.

CHAP. IV.

The believer's triumph in Jesus, under a sense of the defilement of sin.

IT is in virtue of this fellowship with Jesus, that believers are freely forgiven all their iniquities. His atonement was the work of our great High Priest, who was made sin for us, although he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. God is of purer eyes than to look upon the least iniquity: and there is a defilement in sin, which makes it exceeding filthy and abominable in his sight. He showed his utter abhorrence of it by establishing in the Old Testament such an abundance of legal pollutions, as might exhibit to sense the defiling nature of sin, and might keep it ever before their eyes, and fresh upon their minds. And by making it necessary that the worshippers should be purified from these pollutions, and by establishing the means of their purification, and by forbidding every other, he would lead them to ex-

ercise faith in the great purifier, whose office it was to purge their consciences, before they could offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. And it was a fixed law, that if any one, legally unclean, neglected or refused the appointed means of being cleansed, he was to bear his iniquity : for an unpardoned sinner can have no communion with a most holy God.

Unto the pure all things are pure ; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled. The mind is the fountain from whence all the streams flow. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c. these are the things which defile the man. An enlightened conscience is made sensible of this, and feels the necessity of being purified from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, in order to approach God, and to have boldness and access with confidence to the throne of grace. His meditations at such times are like these :—

The more I know of myself, the more I am led to loath myself, and to repent in dust

and ashes: for I am a sinner, filthy and abominable altogether. By nature as vile as sin can render a fallen creature, and daily polluting myself in heart and life with fresh impurities. I have no means of cleansing myself: no hope, that any thing in the creation can do it for me. Deep in my very constitution the stain remains. And I am forced to be crying out—Unclean, unclean. My case would be quite desperate, if God himself had not provided a remedy, the report of which has come to mine ears in the gospel. O! it is blessed news. I welcome it to my heart: that God has opened a fountain, which cleanseth from all sin. He has recommended it to me, as having infinite virtue and everlasting efficacy to cleanse. And I have a command from heaven, vile and filthy as I am, to make use of it: for thus it is written—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." When the Holy Spirit enables the sinner to believe the report, and to mix faith with it, then he has a war-

rant thus to pray—" Purge me with hysop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow—Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities—Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." and the Lord hears and answers the prayer in these words—" I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put my spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them: I will also save you from all your uncleannesses." The sacrifices, from the beginning, preached this blessed doctrine; Their blood could sanctify, by divine appointment, to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purify the conscience from dead works to serve the living

God. Blessed, for ever blessed be his grace, who by this offering hath opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, in which the most polluted may wash and be clean: For Christ so loved the church as to give himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it might be holy and without blemish: for his blood has infinite virtue to purify the foulest sinner, even so to cleanse him, that he may be perfect for ever: and the great use of faith is to receive it, and to apply it, even as God himself has recommended it: and it has lost none of its virtue. To this very day, it purifies as perfectly as ever it did, and believers now, in life, and in the hour of death, feel its divine efficacy, as truly as the martyred Stephen did. I find a dying Christian thus proclaiming his faith and hope in it, when heart and flesh were failing him. "Am not I, my friends, a monument of God's rich, free grace, of his boundless love and mercy

in Christ? O most extensive is the efficacy of his precious blood! for it has reached to me, one of the vilest of sinners: O here is boundless goodness, unfathomable love! This blood has washed clean my soul, the seat of defilement, that was as black as hell; purified my conscience, that was darker than the grave, and made it brighter than the light: in a word, this blood will make me, who was vile—most vile—a child of hell—an heir of wrath, holy before God, and fit to live with God, and the Lamb, with angels, and the spirits of good men made perfect, to all eternity, and in a few minutes my soul shall be made perfect also. O blessed, for ever blessed be God my Saviour: eternal praises be rendered unto thee." This is true faith, and high honour put upon the blood of Jesus, to seal God's testimony concerning it. He hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. Trusting to it, the foulest sins are washed as white as snow, and crimson sins as the purest wool. So the Beloved says to

his church—" Behold, thou art fair, my love: behold thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee: thou art all glorious within:" No angel can be whiter or purer, or stand more accepted before God than he does who is washed in the blood of the Lamb. O blessed man who hast obtained redemption by it! thou art commanded to enter with boldness into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus—the way is open; thou art called to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having thy heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and thy body washed with pure water, that thou mayest hold thy profession of faith without wavering, as that great multitude did, who washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; they are now crying with a loud voice, " Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." They triumph indeed: and so mayest thou. Thou hast the same reason as they have. The same fountain, which washed their robes, cleanses thine: the same promises that it will, and thou shalt

stand before God without spot of sin unto eternal salvation, as perfect as they. Jesus is thy Saviour, as truly as he is theirs. Even to day, thy conscience purged from guilt, and thy heart purified by faith, thou mayest enter within the vail, and make sweet melody in thy heart unto the Lord thy God. Our elder brethren round his throne are employed in the same delightful work. We do it here as well as we can: they in heaven, and we on earth. The same subject in the church below, as well as above, and the same employment. We try to sing the praises of the worthy, slaughtered Lamb in as high a note as they do. And when we fail we try again, praying the Holy Spirit to enable us to keep in tune with them, that our songs may daily be more spiritual and heavenly. A poet of our own, feeling something of this harmony, would have us to celebrate the triumphs of the Lamb of God, in these words:

There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

CHAP. V.

The believer's triumph over sin in its guilt.

THE forgiveness of sins is the grand doctrine of salvation, on which peace with God is built. Sin is present with the believer, but pardoned. Sin is felt, but ceases to condemn. This is the chief difficulty in experience. How the truth of God, and his holiness, and his threatenings, and the honour of his law can be maintained, and yet he can be faithful and just to forgive us our sins. The believer may be often shaken in his mind, and troubled with legal fears and workings, if he be not so well established by the Spirit, and word of God, as to submit in his conscience to God's way of pardoning sin. It was always one and the same, contrived and appointed in the everlasting counsels of the blessed Trinity, and revealed upon the entrance of sin, viz. that a person in Jehovah would become incarnate, and take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. To him Moses and all the prophets give witness,

" After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, whom no one could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And they sung with a loud voice, saying—" Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."—Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

live safe out of the reach of the destroyer. We know our danger as they did, and we look to the Lamb of God for safety. It is the Holy Spirit who convinces both of sin and of pardon. His conviction of sin makes an impression upon the conscience of its infinite evil. He stops the sinner's mouth, and makes him subscribe to all that is said in scripture of his guilt, and of his danger. Looking at himself under the law, and under sin, which is the transgression of the law, he is made to submit to the sentence of condemnation, and has nothing of his own to plead in arrest of judgment. Thus he is taught to think of the law, as God does, both of its precepts and penalties. He sees infinite justice, and holiness, and truth, armed against him, and the desert of his sins to be everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, which he has no power to resist, and no means to escape. When the Holy Spirit convinces him of righteousness, and manifests the grace of God, in the free forgiveness of his sins, yet still he feels the exceeding wickedness of them. He loaths

and abhors himself, as the subject of them, and groans, being burthened with the abiding sense of his corruptions. At his very best it is—O wretched man, who shall deliver me? &c. but at the same time he can rejoice in God his Saviour—I thank God through Jesus Christ—He is the propitiation for my sins, and I have found peace with God through faith in his blood. Thus the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. He gives a steadfast faith in the atonement of Jesus, and settles such a peace in the conscience, as answers all charges from sin and from unbelief. And hereby he fulfils the proclamation of grace in the new Testament, which agrees exactly with the sentiments of the Old. When our Lord sent out his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, his commission to them runs in these words: "And Jesus said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all

nations." They were to warn sinners of their danger, and to call upon them to look to Jesus, and to him only, for salvation. For he, who commandeth all men every where to repent, hath exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto his people, and forgiveness of their sins. It is a gift of his royal grace. One of the high honours of his exaltation—that he can freely forgive every iniquity, and transgression, and sin, be they ever so many, or ever so great. For Jesus can take away all iniquity, and receive the sinner graciously.—We, says Peter, are witnesses of these things: and so also is the Holy Ghost; whom God hath given to them that obey him—that come at his call in the gospel, and obey it: the Holy Ghost turning them from self to Christ, from sin to righteousness, from a life of sense to a life of faith, thereby witnesses their true conversion, which is a continual work of his grace in that repentance which is not to be repented of; and when he enables them to glorify God for this mercy he gives great joy and peace in believing

the forgiveness of their sins: according to the commission which our Lord gave to St. Paul at his conversion, "I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." When this commission is opened to a sinner in his name, and credited by the power of his Spirit, then the conscience is purged from guilt, by that one offering, which perfecteth for ever. The believer in it has a clean heart given him. It is sanctified, and made a temple for the worship of the true God. To this the word witnesses; and the Holy Ghost is also a witness to him, that he may now enter with boldness into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. Every possible hinderance being removed, he may have access with confidence to the throne of grace—to a Father of mercies, loving him, and blessing him with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. When he lives up to these privileges, then he feels as

he ought to do. His faith relying steadfastly upon the divine promises, and giving full credit to a faithful God, he has a good conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God, and his heart consecrated for this service, he may sing of pardon and peace in as high a note of praise, and with as much spiritual joy, as ever any believer experienced. They had much in the Old Testament, when they sung the triumphs of the Lamb of God in the twentieth Psalm. The argument of which is thus given us in Bishop Horne's Comment. "1—4. The church prayeth for the prosperity of King Messiah, going forth to the battle as her champion and deliverer. For his acceptance by the Father, and for the accomplishment of his will:—5, 6, 7. She declareth her full assurance of faith, and her resolution to trust in him alone, and not in the arm of flesh;—8. She foreseeth the fall of her enemies, and her own exaltation: and 9. concludeth with a prayer to the God of her strength." As long as the temple stood, and the service of God was regularly carried

on in it, the true worshippers had every day a solemn commemoration of that sacrifice, which was to put away their sins. They were taught to look to that precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, whom God had set forth in every sacrifice to be the great propitiation and atonement; through which alone they were to expect pardon and peace. While the lamb was burning on the altar every morning and evening, they celebrated his praises with the choicest instruments of music, and with the sweetest voices, making also melody in their hearts at the same time unto the Lord. Among other hymns given by inspiration of God for this joyful occasion, they used to sing the twentieth Psalm, in which they triumphed in the God of their salvation, and declared their faith and hope in him in full concert, after this manner:—

"Jehovah will hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob will

defend thee. He will send thee help from his sanctuary, and he will strengthen thee out of Sion: he will grant thee according to thy heart, and he will fulfil all thy purposes. Then we shall shout for joy in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we shall set up our banners, when Jehovah shall fulfil all thy requests. Now I have known Jehovah will help the Messiah—his Christ, and will answer him from his sanctuary with the mighty power of the right hand of Jesus. Some put their trust in chariots, and others in horses, but we will cause the name of Jehovah our Alehim (the Trinity in covenant) to be remembered. They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen, and made still to stand safe: for the King (Jesus) will put forth his power to save us: he will answer us in the day when we pray unto him."

These are the words of the hymn; in which they express their faith in the future triumphs of the Lamb of God, and their hope in that one offering of his which was to perfect them for ever. The divine appoint-

ment, the divine acceptance, the divine application of his sacrifice, is the most noble subject, that could be sung upon earth: indeed it is the subject of heaven, and will be the harmony and concert of eternity. May the Holy Ghost put our hearts in tune to join in it, and to adore and to bless the Lamb that was slain, setting up our banners as they did, Rom. viii. 31, 32, 33, 34. conquerors over sin and Satan and all their enemies. We have the same Jesus to rejoice in, and as good reason as ever believers had, to rejoice in him with a fulness of joy. When the heart feels as happy as it can be here in God the Saviour, these are some of the delightful exercises of faith in his blood:—

O, what am I, that such a sinner as I am should be thus highly favoured! A child of wrath by nature, even as others, and by practice—having sinned long with greediness—against light and conviction—sinning and sorrowing—sorrowing and sinning from year to year—a slave to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eyes, and to the pride of life, every moment fit and ripe for hell. O

what a monument of infinite patience and long-suffering! spared from day to day, and at last called to the saving knowledge of Jesus. O what exceeding riches of grace are these—that the Father would choose me in the Beloved, and give him to save me from sin and misery: that he would send his Spirit to quicken me, and to enable me to belive that there was mercy in Jesus for me, even for me, and plenteous redemption. What sinner can be more indebted than I am, for such miracles of grace. Glory be to God in the highest. My Lord Jesus, the great God and my Saviour, gave himself for me, that he might redeem me from all iniquity, and might cleanse me from all sin. Trusting to his atonement, and to his righteousness, I am led to admire the Father's full absolution; "Thy sins and thine iniquities I will remember no more." Thanks be to him for this unspeakable gift. He has pronounced them blessed, and he has caused me to feel some of their blessedness, whose iniquities he has forgiven, and whose sin he has covered; and therefore I look forward

with thankfulness to the great day of redemption, when Jesus will present me to himself, holy and without blemish, as if I had never sinned. In this hope of salvation I triumph before God. Now I see the felicity of thy chosen—I rejoice in the gladness of thy people—and I glory with thine inheritance. Unto him, who chose me in his Son—Unto him, who loved me and washed me from my sins in his own blood—Unto him, who gave me this faith and keeps me in it; for this fellowship with the eternal Three, be eternal praise. Amen.

CHAP. VI.

The believer's victory over the dominion of sin.

WE have heard from scripture some of the victories of faith over sin in its pollution and in its guilt. But there is still a hard warfare to be maintained against its dominion: for it reigneth absolutely in the children of disobedience, and it never ceaseth to strive for mastery in the children of God; who have an evil nature, still—an old man, who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and who is to be put off every day—denied in his desires—mortified in his affections, and crucified in his appetites. Thus the commandment runs, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." And the new man, who is called to this warfare, is ordered to make use of Christ's fulness for promised courage, and strength, and victory: for without Christ he can do nothing. Sin is himself—he is a body of sin; and he has not only to fight against

himself, but also against principalities and powers, hosts of foes, united under the banner of the God of this world, trying all their cunning, and all their force to bring the believer back into the bondage of corruption; and what he has of his own is on their side. His worst foe is his indwelling sin, which has a complete body with all its members and lusts, always enticing to something unlawful, and tempting to the commission of it. Every faculty is ready to become an instrument of unrighteousness unto sin. It is an absolute tyrant, which rules its slaves with the most cruel rigour, keeping them captive to its will, although nothing but destruction and misery be in their ways.

Thus original sin is described in the ninth article of our church—it is the fault and corruption of every man born of Adam. And notwithstanding it still remaineth in the regenerate, yet there is a promise of daily and of complete victory over the tyrant. Thus it is written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace." Once sin had full do-

minion, but it is taken away by the Spirit of Christ; not entirely destroyed, as to its being, but as to its ruling power—dethroned in the judgment, there seen as it is exceeding sinful, exceeding dangerous—dethroned in the conscience : the believer no longer under the law, but under grace, is freed from condemnation—dethroned in the will : "not my will, Lord, but thine be done"—dethroned in the heart, "I hate all evil thoughts, but thy law I do love : O what love have I unto thy law"—dethroned in the life, crucified with its affections and lusts, by the power of the cross of Jesus. It is not quite dead, but it is put to a lingering death, kept upon the cross, dying daily. And thus the sin, which is pardoned through the blood of Christ, is conquered by the arm of Christ, as it is written, "He will subdue our iniquities," and faith in his promised help keeps them under, subdues them effectually, so that they do not reign in the mortal body to obey them in the lusts thereof. Take an instance of this triumphant faith. Whatever the natural man can set his heart upon, or

seek his happiness in the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, Moses was enabled by the Spirit of Christ to overcome. "By faith, Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." What but almighty grace could have given him such a complete victory? He gained entire dominion over sin, even when it came to tempt him with all the pleasures, and riches, and honours of the world. He was made strong in faith: Christ ruling in his heart brought every high thought into subjection to himself: so that Moses not only resigned all his temporal advantages for Christ's sake, but what natural men account a great paradox, he chose reproach, poverty, misery, rather than give up his interest in Christ. This is the victory which still overcometh the world,

even our faith. The New Testament furnishes us with such another instance of Christian heroism in the apostle of the Gentiles. He gives us an account of his own experience, and by what means he was now no longer under the law, but under grace—a sinner saved from the sentence of the broken law, and from all hope of being made righteous by his own personal keeping of it: "I through the law, says he, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God, &c." Once he was alive without the law, when he thought proudly of his own good life, that concerning the law he was blameless, but when the commandment came in the power of the Spirit, then it slew him, and killed all his former legal hopes. What he had trusted in before for life, he now found to be unto death. And Christ, faith in Christ, was the only means by which he saw he could live unto God, by his grace and to his glory. By this faith he then experienced the power of the crucified and risen Jesus: I am in Christ, says he, crucified with him, truly and spiritually dead to sin, to self, to the

world, by the virtue of his cross: nevertheless by the same faith in the same Jesus, I live, the Spirit of life in him has quickened my spirit. He has given me a new birth into the spiritual world, and has brought me to live upon the fulness of Jesus, as really now by faith, as I hope to live upon him by sense in heaven. "Yet not I," I neither had it of myself, nor do I continue it by any act of my own, "but Christ liveth in me. And although I seem to live outwardly like other men, yet the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, depending upon him every moment for fresh supplies of his Spirit, to keep me in union and communion with the Father and the Son, and thereby he gives me to feel in my heart some of the blessings of that love of God in Christ, which surpasseth knowledge. It is this that purifies my soul, and sanctifies my life. Blessed, for ever blessed be his name, who thus loved me, and gave himself for me.

Such were the heroes of Christianity. They fought the Lord's battles, and in the

power of his might they subdued sin: they obtained dominion over it through faith in Jesus. And the same faith in the same Jesus is still mighty through him to obtain as great victories. The truth of his promise, the faithfulness of the promiser, the strength of his arm to fulfil his promise; these did not fail Moses, nor Paul—never did—never can fail any believer. Thus speaketh the Lord unto them—"Sin shall not have dominion over you"—having pardoned it by my blood. I will subdue it by my Spirit: trust me, you shall find strong faith an overmatch for strong sin, because it fights in the strength of Jesus, to whom all things are possible, and who must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. And sin and death shall be no more. Say, it is a besetting sin, this only gives more employment for faith, and for the power of Jesus. It may be a sin of constitution, breaking out into wrath and passion, that the man has no government of himself. But the spirit of Christ can make him a new creature, and can enable him to put off the old man with

his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. It may be a long habit of sin. But is any thing too hard for the Lord? Has he not promised—" A new heart will I give you, and I will put my Spirit within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my commandments and practise them?" Wherever grace reigns this scripture is fulfilled. The armies of the Lord of hosts fight under his banner, and no weapon formed against them can prosper. Kept by his mighty power they are daily more than conquerors, marching on triumphant over all opposition: for he enables them to hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end. Thus they were commanded to pray—" Order my steps, O Lord, according to thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." They looked to his word, and to his arm for the right ordering of their steps, believing that he would keep the steps of his saints, and sin should not have dominion

over them, now they were no longer under the law, but under the kingdom of his grace. The victory which he had promised, they expected, and he did put forth his power, according to that good word wherein he had caused them to place their trust. They found his grace sufficient to subdue the tyranny of iniquity; yea, where sin had abounded, grace did much more abound in daily victory over its wiles, and its assaults. And the power of Christ resting upon them, they were kept in this spirit of prayer.

O thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen me mightily by thy Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith, and I may have his strength to set against the power of my sins, and mine enemies. For orders, for courage, for perseverance, for victory, for eternal triumph, I look unto thee for all. Blessed be thy name, that thou hast chosen me to be a soldier, and to fight under the banner of Jesus. I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. He made all mine enemies his own, and they are now under his

feet; and I believe according to thy good word, that thou wilt put them under mine. Thou hast conquered them for me, and hast engaged to conquer them in me, and by me. It is of thy mere grace, almighty Jesus, that I am enabled to deny myself, to take up my cross, and to follow thee in this holy war. All my sufficiency is from the fresh supplies of thy Spirit. O grant me them abundantly to the increase of my faith, and to the praise of thy promised help. Cause me to depend every moment upon it, let me experience, that when I am weakest in myself, I may be made strongest in the Lord. And when I have nothing left me to glory in of mine own, then my soul may magnify the Lord, and my spirit may rejoice in God my Saviour. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, because the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation. To his grace and power be all the glory for ever and ever. Amen, and Amen.

CHAP. VII.

The believer's triumph over his troubles.

AFTER sin is pardoned, and the pardoned sinner is enabled to fight the good fight of faith against it, yet there is another enemy assaulting him to the last moment of his life. Fallen man is born to trouble. The man in Christ is so far from being exempt, that many are the troubles of the righteous. He is in common with others, liable to pain and poverty, and to afflictions of every kind. He is by his very profession exposed to some of the most trying nature—his owning Christ—his following Christ—his conformity to Christ—give offence, provoke the malice of wicked men, and the rage of wicked spirits: wave does not follow wave more certainly, than every day brings its fresh troubles, and forces the believer to seek for aids, and comforts out of himself. This is a sore sight of afflictions. To bear up under them with any patience, and to reap profit from them, is a task above the power of mere man. Every

little pain stirs up murmuring and impatience, and this rebellion against God's will is the parent of a thousand fretful tempers. And thus exercised by sharp suffering, renders the man truly miserable. If his suffering continues long, increases much, it often drives the poor sinner to despair; and if he has no Saviour to flee unto, he is sometimes guilty of selfmurder, and dies in an act of sin, rushing headlong into everlasting destruction. The wisdom of man, of Cato himself, furnished no better remedy against the numerous evils of human life.

To man thus exposed to suffering, and helpless under it, his suffering remaining as long as sin remains, how necessary must be the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? He has vouchsafed to give us his promises of help, suited to every possible case of distress. When it is his will, that any of his people should be tried, he engages to make the trial of their faith much more precious than that of gold, which perisheth. He is with them, present with his divine supports and holy comforts. "Call upon me, says he, in the

day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but out of them all the Lord delivereth them." They acknowledge it with gratitude: "God was our refuge and strength, we have found him a very present help in trouble," helping us to bear up under the heaviest pressures, keeping his everlasting arms underneath us, as long as we suffer, and if the sufferings increase, increasing our faith and patience, until they have done their perfect work.

It is through the aids of his Spirit these promises have their full credit, through his inward peace, which he alone can give, and which the world cannot take away. When he makes the heart to feel happy in God, enjoying the peculiar supports of the gospel, and living up to its privileges, then the believer finds the apostle's experience to be true—"always sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," and sometimes with a fulness of joy, according to what is written, "But now, thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, *Fear*

not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine: When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee: For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour: *Fear not*, for I am with thee," to support, to deliver. This is spoken to the redeemed, who are God's property, and whom he bought with a great price. What could the Lord God engage to do for them more, than is here promised, in order to still all their guilty fears, and to quiet all their natural fears; trusting to the redemption that is in the blood of the Lamb, they are under his keeping, they go out in his strength to meet their trials and their enemies. Jesus is with them, on their side; and therefore believing in him they need not fear any suffering. Jehovah is their Alehim, their covenant God in Trinity, their sworn allies, engaged by his almighty arm to save them from all evil, and to give them all possible

good. " I the Lord, says he, do keep thee —I will water thee with the dew of heaven every moment—lest any hurt thee, I will keep thee night and day." Having such great and exceeding precious promises, with what holy courage should the believer look up to a faithful God, and what strong consolation should they afford him, when he is to go through the fire or through the water. He may sing with Jonah, " I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving—salvation is of the Lord." Or with the triumphant faith of the three children who were not afraid to go into the furnace, heated seven times hotter than usual, fully persuaded, that whether they lived or died Jesus would be with them. Threatened with the burning fiery furnace, if they refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image, " They said, O king, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." And he did, he went with them into the fire, and they walked in the midst of

the flames unhurt. The same Jesus is daily repeating the same miracle. He has approved himself in all ages to be the friend of his afflicted people. Whatever he sends to them, he sends it with his blessing. So they testify —"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." They knew it by his promise, and they felt it by experience: it is good for us that we have been in trouble: we have gone through many seas and storms of affliction, and through the raging fire of persecution, not only unhurt, but benefited: for Christ was with us; as the sufferings of Christ abounded, so our consolation abounded by Christ. He feels for them, as his members, and has bowels of the tenderest compassion. In all their affliction he is afflicted. He brings in his supports, and comes with his deliverance in the best time. He leaves no accusation of sin in the conscience, but gives and maintains a sweet peace with God. O what matter of triumph is it, when this peace rules in the heart, always, and by all means testifying—

"Since God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Thanks without ceasing be to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain for this complete and eternal victory over sin. The apostle carries on his praises, Rom. viii. that through Jesus all outward opposition shall fall before us—"Who shall separate us from Christ's love to us? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter: nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." His love is in them all——appoints them, sends them, proportions them, and they conquer them all in his strength, not only conquer,

but are more than conquerors: they are great gainers, they gain what is better than all the world, fresh proof of his love, they gain experience of it. For they find that nothing can hurt them, now he has taken them under his protection. For this his divine support we are taught to pray daily, asking it as a matter of mere favour, and expecting it only through the grace and intercession of our great high priest.

We humbly beseech thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities, and for the glory of thy name turn from us all those evils which we most righteously have deserved, and grant that in all our troubles we may put our whole trust and confidence in thy mercy, and evermore serve thee in holiness, and pureness of living, to thy honour and glory, through our only mediator and advocate Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

When this is the prayer of faith, outward trials become inward mercies; for the Holy Spirit keeps the heart settled with its whole trust and confidence upon his promised help; so that if the trials increase, he makes them

redound to the glory of God. If the outward man be a greater sufferer, even ready to perish, he renews the inward man day by day; he brings in abundant grace to sanctify abundant sufferings; whereby he satisfies the hearts of the sufferers, that these light afflictions which are but for a moment, will work for them a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory. The hope of this keeps them patient and thankful. By the power of the Holy Ghost, they know this eternal triumph will be soon. Yet a very, very little while, they will be favoured with the sight of the king in his beauty. They shall sit down with him in his throne, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.

For the farther confirmation of our faith, he has set before us a cloud of witnesses, who testify, with one voice, that he sanctified all their troubles and turned them into covenant blessings. So one of them said—"I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O mag-

nify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he heard, and delivered me from all my fears. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." Their very troubles become matter of triumph. He shut them up in the ark, and they were saved, when he drowned the world of the ungodly. Peter speaking from experience says, the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of their troubles, as he did righteous Lot when he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. The more the Egyptians oppressed his people, the more they multiplied and grew. Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. The fire of persecution raged against the church, but the blood of the martyrs was fruitful, and increased it both in number and in grace. The seed of the wicked one have been at enmity with the children of the promise from the beginning, but these trusted in the Captain of their salvation, and he led them on conquering and to conquer.

"Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valient in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection"—these and the other worthies mentioned, Hebrews chap. xi. did wonders through Christ, who strengthened them. They loved not their lives unto death, fully persuaded, that when he should call them to it, he would be with them, and would enable them to finish their course with joy. And he did, for they all obtained a good report through faith, leaving us an example to follow the steps of their faith, and encouraging us to do it with holy boldness, whatever troubles we meet with in our way. We may, we ought to rejoice in tribulation, for we have the same Jesus to look unto, the author and the finisher of their faith and ours, the same promises of his sup-

port, the same almighty arm to make them good, and the same matter of triumph, which they experienced, whom he led on from strength to strength, until every one of them in Sion appeared before God. This is the certain heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness and salvation is of me, saith the Lord.

Of the same sentiments were our reformers, which they give us in these remarkable words in one of their prayers: "O God, who art the author of peace, and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies, that we surely trusting in thy defence may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

And to the same purpose in one of their homilies they thus express themselves: "All correction which God sendeth us in this present time, seemeth to have no joy and comfort, but sorrow and pain, yet it bringeth with it a taste of God's mercy, and goodness,

towards them that be so corrected, and a sure hope of God's everlasting consolation in heaven. If then these sorrows, diseases, and sicknesses, and also death itself, be nothing else but our heavenly Father's rod, whereby he certifieth us of his love, and gracious favour, whereby he trieth and purifieth us, whereby he giveth unto us holiness, and certifieth us that we be his children, and he our merciful Father: shall we not then with all humility, as obedient and loving children, joyfully kiss our heavenly Father's rod, and ever say in our heart, with our Saviour Jesus Christ, Father, if this anguish and sorrow which I feel, and death which I see approach, may not pass, but that thy will is that I must suffer them, *thy will be done.*"

O thou hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, I acknowledge my reluctance to take up thy cross, and my weakness in bearing it, hold thou me up by fresh supplies of thy Spirit, that I may be safe. Let thy strength be perfected in my weakness. Thy promises of help are exceeding great, through thee I do believe the truth of

them, and I pray for grace to make a right use of them. Enable me in patience to possess my soul, that when it is thy will to try my faith, I may live up to my privileges, and may find it better to suffer with Christ than to reign with the world. O Lord, thou hast showed this favour to Moses, and thou hast done more than this—thou hast made thy witnesses glorify thee in the fires—they have marched on, fighting thy battles against hosts of foes, and they did not account their lives dear to themselves, so they might finish their course with joy, and die in faith, blessing and praising thy holy name. O thou faithful God, thou art the same to us now, as thou wast to them. Lead me on then in thy strength, trusting in thy word, and leaning on thine arm. Thou hast promised thy flock, and I hope I am one of them—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." O thou good Shepherd, let me trust in thy love, and feel thy supports, that whatever lies before me to

be done or suffered, I may be enabled to do it, and to suffer it by the continual supplies of thy Spirit. And by his influence help me to persevere, till I win the prize of my high calling, and be admitted to join that great company, whom no one can number, who stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun smite them, nor any heat: for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. O my Jesus, I bless thee for this most glorious prospect. It is of thy mere grace that I am in any measure enabled to join that great company. It is entirely of thy special favour that I have any

good hope to come to their glory: for this, and for all thy mercies, to thee with the Father, and the eternal Spirit, the three in one Jehovah, I give honour, and glory, and thanks, to-day, and I hope to do it without ceasing for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

CHAP. VIII.

The believer's triumph over the infirmities of old age.

IT is appointed unto all men once to die. The time is fixed by an immutable decree. The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is cut soon off, and we flee away. If some be permitted to live longer, yet the infirmities of old age must arrive, bringing with them labour and sorrow, the forerunners of death. Circulation will become languid. The senses of the body will grow dull and heavy. The faculties of the mind will be impaired, and will discover it by not remembering proper names. In this decline of life believers are subject to the same infirmities with other men; they have no exemption from pain, or sickness, or death: but they have that which keeps up their spirits, and makes them patient and joyful. The consolations of God are then most needed.

and he has promised them, and he is faithful: he never failed them who trusted in him. He has suited his promises to all the infirmities of age. He knows our frame perfectly, and has described it with an unerring pen, Ecclesiastes, chap. xii. that when we feel the signs of old age, we may apply to him for grace to profit by them. The symptoms there given are infallibly true and just, and are as so many monitors, warning the man, that the vigour of life is declining, and that the body is returning to the earth from whence it came. Happy is he who takes this warning, and remembers his Creator in the days of his youth, before the wearisome days come, of weakness and pain. He has fled to Jesus for refuge—and finds and experiences what he has engaged to do for his people, when heart and flesh begin to fail them. Blessed be his grace for the abundant provision which he has made for their faith and patience: he says to them, "I will be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you: so that you may boldly say, The Lord is our helper, and we need

not fear what the infirmities of age can do unto us." One of them, the Christian Hero, thus encouraged himself in the Lord his God —" Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust even from my youth: by thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee —I am a wonder unto many, but thou art my strong refuge." This was his trust: and God did not forsake him. He remembered his word unto his servant, wherein he had caused him to depend. There failed not ought of any good thing, which the Lord had spoken unto him. O what great encouragement have believers to follow the steps of his faith! For his God is their God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, to young and old, who put their trust in him. His promise to the Israel of God cannot be broken. Thus he pledges his word of truth to them, giving them a warrant to pray unto him, " My mouth shall be filled with thy praise, and with thy honour all the day long: for thou wilt not cast me off in the time of old

age, thou wilt not forsake me, when my strength faileth." To this prayer the Lord inclined his ear, and vouchsafed this gracious answer: "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb, and even to your old age I am he, and even to hoary hairs I will carry you, I have made and I will bear you, even will carry, and I will deliver you." These are some of his rich cordials for the aged. He provided for them in his love, and he is sensibly touched with the feeling of their infirmities in administering them: for he himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. His compassions bind him to comfort and relieve his old disciples: and when they apply to him in time of need, he is ever present to grant them his promised help: yea, so suited to their case, as to make them grow in grace, as they grow in years. They bring forth fruit in their old age, the rich fruit of humility, and the ripe fruit of thankfulness; fruit that endureth unto everlasting life. We have an happy in-

stance of this in God's goodness to an ancient believer, who lived to be an hundred and seventy-five years old. He was the friend of God, who had blessed Abraham through life, and that in all things, and who even to hoary hairs loaded him with blessings. For God had promised him, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age;" and the sacred historian relating the fulfilling of the promise, says, "He gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people." His old age was good, in body and soul. Whatever infirmities he had, they were intended for good, and actually did him good. He was a very cheerful, pleasant old man. The peace of his mind had a sweet influence on his temper and behaviour. It kept him from being fretful and peevish in his family. He was loving to his children, and kind to his servants: God himself being witness. He was also happy in his last years; for he spent them in faith, and when they came to an end, he died in peace: with his last breath he committed his spirit into the

hands of him who had redeemed it, *full of years:* it is in the original one word—*he was satisfied:* so it is rendered, Psalm xvii. 15, As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." He was satisfied with what he had enjoyed of the favour and friendship of his God; who had been his shield to defend him from all sins and enemies, and also had promised to be his exceeding great reward. This he obtained, when he was gathered to his people, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the most blissful communion of the Three in Jehovah. All the children of faithful Abraham, treading in the steps of his faith, have the same God to deal with, who keepeth promise for ever. It is recorded of Isaac, the heir of the same promise with his father, that he died in the same faith, an old man. He was tried with many infirmities, but we read of no complaints, though he was an hundred and eighty years of age. He expired in praise and thankfulness, satisfied with life, and hap-

py in the prospect beyond death. And his son Jacob, an hundred and forty seven years old when he was dying declared that he had waited for the salvation of God;—waiting faith is strong faith. And after he had blessed his children, and had given commandment concerning his bones, he quietly as if he had been going to sleep, gathered up his feet into the bed, and died in peace, an old man and satisfied. All these lived in the world, strangers and pilgrims, looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And they were not disappointed of their hope, they all died in faith —in an act of faith, and were gathered to their people, to the general assembly and church of the first-born. When they came to the end of their faith, they came to heaven. The moment they expired, they entered the city, which God had prepared for them: and their bodies, sleeping in the dust, are in the covenant of life, and shall be raised and glorified in the morning of the resurrection. For our Lord proves that the dead shall rise from this very circumstance: he says to the

Jews—"Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living." In this faith the patriarchs died: being children of the resurrection, they left their bodies in the hand and care of a covenant God, well assured that he would raise them up to glory and life everlasting, according to that good word, wherein he had caused them to put their trust.

These examples of the loving-kindness of God to his aged servants were recorded for our learning: that believers, if God by his providence should bring them to old age, might be encouraged to trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with such a confidence of their hearts, as not to doubt of the divine truth, or of the divine power. Whatever he was to them, he is the same to us—our God as well as theirs—our covenant God engaged to glorify both body and soul: on whom we are commanded to cast all our cares and concerns in extreme old age. If

what is of nature be failing, what is of grace cannot. If the life of sense be dying, the life of faith should flourish the more: it is a life that cannot die: for the branches thrive and bring forth fruit in their old age, not of themselves, but because they are engrafted into the heavenly vine, in which they live for ever. "I am the vine, says Jesus, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." But through my Spirit strengthening you, he will make you bud and flourish, and fill the face of the world with fruit. He will so fill you with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Christ Jesus, to the glory and praise of God, that your last days shall be your best days.

In this view of old age, it may become a favourable time for exercising and improving faith: because the activity of the life of sense is abating, and thereby many things are removed, which before obstructed the growth of the spiritual life. Now is the time to learn to walk by faith, and not by sense.

A believer young in years, and young in experience, is often tempted to judge of himself by his feelings, more than by the word of God. In a good frame he is a good believer. Then all is well with him. But when he is walking in darkness, he is very apt to question his state—"If all be right with me, why am I thus?"—My present frame is very dull and uncomfortable—I am not so lively as I used to be in prayer, or in ordinances—my delight in God, and the things of God, is far short of what it was formerly—perhaps I have been deceiving myself, and crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace for me.

From this temptation age itself is a sort of deliverance: self-activity is weakened, and thereby through grace, self-dependence. The believer, if he be a good scholar, will now learn to walk more by faith, and less by sight. The vigour of his senses is decaying. The high spirits of youth are abating. His present lesson is very plain and simple, and while he attends to what is passing in him, and about him, he has a thousand monitors,

calling upon him now to learn and practise a perfect dependence on those things which are always one and the same, without any variableness, or the least shadow of turning. One record of God. One Saviour. One Spirit. One faith, of which the Saviour is the author and the finisher. This faith is made to grow and flourish, as there is less dependence on other things: and as age itself tends to weaken this dependence, it becomes in the hand of the Holy Spirit, a favourable time to live less upon the things which are seen, and more upon the things which are not seen. Less of sense, more of faith. One scale rises as the other falls. The outward man dying, the inward man grows more lively—yea, grows up into Christ Jesus, and that in all things. O blessed old man—thou hast lived to a good time, when this is thy experience: when in the prayer of faith thou canst cast all thy burdens on thy Saviour: "Lord, keep me, a poor helpless creature—now I feel that of myself, I can do nothing, as I ought, or as I wish to do. Glorify thy grace in me, and strengthen me mightily by

thy Spirit in the inner man, that I may bless thee for thy salvation, and for the things which accompany salvation. Into thy faithful hands, for life and death, I commit myself, and all my concerns; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth."

But it must be remembered, that old age does not produce these happy effects of itself. It is not of nature, but entirely of grace, that any one is able to gain such spiritual profit from bodily infirmities. The mere natural man, fortify him with all his boasted aids of reason, and philosophy, yet he cannot help murmuring, when age brings weakness, and sickness brings pains. He becomes peevish and fretful. Having no friendship with God, he cannot look up for divine supports, when all human begin to fail him. Under a severe fit of the stone, or a long fit of the gout, he is often out of all patience. Uneasy in himself, he is out of humour with every body and every thing. How different is the believer in the same circumstances! His body feels pain as others do: but his mind is comfortable, and at ease. Happy in God, he has pa-

tience given him to bear his sufferings, and grace to profit from them; yea, the peace of God rules in his heart always, and by all means.

An old man with this peace which surpasseth all understanding, ruling in his heart, will be so far from complaining, that he has every thing to be thankful for, which can render him blessed of the Lord. He is provided with an infallible antidote against all that old age can try him with. It is true, I have an infirm body, but thank God, I have a sound mind. Age has brought upon me great weakness, but this makes more room for the power of God, that it may be perfected in my weakness. I have many pains, but not so many as he has comforts to give me; in the worst of them he keeps me patient, "Father thy will be done"—I have an afflicted body, but I have an happy heart; although the outward man be perishing, yet I faint not, because the inward man is renewed day by day. My supports are great, the consolations of God not a few—I feel the symptoms of old age warning me daily of

my approaching dissolution, through grace I take the warning—they find me living, and I hope they will find me dying, in the faith of the Son of God. The earthly tabernacle is taking down, but he does it with much tenderness and love, and assures me, that he has prepared for me a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. May he who keeps it for me, and me for it, never leave me nor forsake me, till I be with him, where he is, and be like him, and enjoy him for ever and ever! Yet a very, very little while—hold on faith and patience, and I shall see Jesus in his glory, which is the heaven of heavens.

O thou merciful and faithful high priest, Jesus Christ, I bless thee for thy kind promises to the aged. Thou hast suited them in great mercy to all their infirmities, and thou art always with them to help in time of need. I begin to feel the sad effects of sin in my body, weakening it, and tending to bring it down to its appointed end. To thee I look, almighty Jesus, for thy promised grace. O grant me constant supplies of thy

Spirit, that I may profit by my infirmities, may exercise and improve my faith in thee, that they may keep me humble, and I may pray more in faith, and keep me thankful, that I may be more in praise. Thine arm is not shortened, nor can thy compassions fail. Stand by me then, and hold me up according to thy word. Make me strong in thy strength, that I may daily put more honour upon thy love and thy power. In the decline of life, let me not doubt of thy faithfulness to support, and when thou seest it best to comfort me. Vouchsafe me the consolations of God, when my heart and my flesh fail me, then be thou the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. When I am weakest in myself, then make me strongest in the Lord; and if it be thy holy will, that I should become quite helpless, an infant again, make me to lie quiet in thy hand, without murmuring or repining, but believing that thou art all my salvation, and enjoying in thee all my desire. Grant me this, Lord Jesus; for thy mercies sake, let me die in faith. Amen and Amen.

CHAP. IX.

The believer's triumph over death.

MAN consists of two parts, a body and a soul. The bodily life is dependent on the light and air of this world, and on the circulation, which they maintain and carry on. When this connexion is broken, the body expires, it loses all sense and motion, and is dead. So the life of the soul is dependent on the light and air of the spiritual world. Jehovah in Trinity is the Creator, the only fountain of being, and there can be nothing independent of him: Christ is the light, and the Holy Spirit is the breath or air of all spiritual life, and when this connexion is broken, although the soul may exist, yet its happiness in God is broken, and at an end. Sin, that great murderer sin, brought death upon body and soul: "For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And we read, The soul that sinneth, it shall die, sin separating it from

its union, and thereby cutting it off from its communion with the Father of spirits. In the moment that Adam sinned the spiritual death took place ; for he had lost the spirit of life, and was dead in trespasses and sins : and that same moment his body became mortal, although he lived nine hundred years after. Thus we have sin, and death, and misery, entailed upon all his descendants, from the first Adam, who is of the earth, earthy. O how precious to a sinner in these circumstances should be the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who stands at the head of the spiritual world, that he may give his righteousness, and his life, and his happiness to all that believe in him ! He comes Jehovah of hosts in our nature, as our champion to fight our battles, and to conquer all our foes. Immanuel was made sin for us, and he died for our sins according to the scriptures, when the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. We read therein of his noble challenge to death and the grave : " I will ransom my people

from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death—O death, I will be thy plagues—O grave, I will be thy destruction, repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." It was the Captain of our salvation, the Lord of hosts is his name, who purposed this in the everlasting councils, and in due time fulfilled it by his almighty power. "Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." O what infinite condescension is this, what love, surpassing all knowledge! The most high God is manifest in the flesh, that as God in our nature, he might be our surety to act and suffer for us men, and for our salvation. Accordingly he takes our sins upon himself, bears the guilt and punishment of them in his own body and soul upon the tree, gives his own life a ransom for ours, that by his death he

might live. He was buried, but he rose again the third day, having loosed the bonds of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. In this conflict with death and the grave, repentance was hid from his eyes. He knew what he was to go through, more than any of us can conceive of pain and agony, yet he would not change his purpose of grace, although he was to become obedient unto death, the most tormenting, the most shameful, even the death of the cross. His enemies having brought him to the grave, and sealed the sepulchre, seemed then to have him in their power. So they thought: but here Jesus made his complete and eternal triumph. By his resurrection he swallowed up death in victory: for he did not rise as a private person, but as the first-fruits of the dead, drawing the joyful harvest after him, "The Lord is risen indeed," the head of the body, the church, and has the power of an endless life to quicken all his members. In which most glorious prospect, the apostle, quoting the passage above mentioned, breaks out into these rap-

tures of joy, seeing all his enemies vanquished, and nothing but bliss and glory before him—"O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." The law armed death with its sting, as the just wages of the transgression of the law: but Jesus our surety magnified the law by his holy life in all its precepts, and by his death in all its penalties. He died for our sins, and by his rising from the dead, he demonstrated that he had taken out its sting, and had disarmed it of its power to hurt: nay had done much more—he had changed death unto life. "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." By faith in him we share in the triumph and glory of his resurrection, and have a new song put into our mouths, with which we may make the sweetest melody in our hearts, even when our breath is failing us. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

These are scripture views of the almighty Jesus. Out of his infinite compassion he undertook to save his people from sin and death, the works of the devil. And he has done it. It is finished. He has put away sin by his sacrifice, and he completed his conquest of death by his resurrection. And has had witnesses of these gospel truths in all ages, whom he sent to preach repentance, and remission of sins, in his name. When it is the good pleasure of his own will to accompany the message with power from on high, then he blesses it by making it the ministration of righteousness and of life: as it is written, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life," already. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath freed the believer from the law of sin and of death, and has also created in him a new life. He has given him a new birth unto the spiritual world, and spiritual senses to fit him for spiritual enjoyments: for he is actually passed from death

unto life. By the Holy Spirit as the agent, and by faith as the instrument, he is made a child of God, united to Christ, one with him, interested in him, and so closely joined to him, as the members are to the head, as to be a real partaker of all that he did upon earth, and of all that he is now doing for his redeemed in heaven. He has a good warrant, for he is not only permitted, but also commanded, to apply to himself all the privileges and blessings, which are contained in this large charter of grace. "Ye are complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that

was against us, which was contrary to us; and he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in that same cross." In this view of the almighty conqueror of all our enemies, and of his enabling us also by faith to come after him, conquering and to conquer, what thanks and praises should be given unto him? There is no possible evil, but he has removed it from us—and no possible good, but he has obtained the right, and gives the possession. We are complete in him, our head—completely circumcised in heart by his circumcision, so as to put off the body of sin, and risen indeed with him by the faith of his own operation: through *which* we have the first resurrection from the grave of sin, and shall have the resurrection of the body from the grave of death. He now gives the first as a sure earnest of the second. He raises us from the grave of sin, and quickens us to newness of life, and thereby gives us a lively hope, that we shall one day be with him and like him. In this hope the redeemed

of the Lord have thus expressed their joys—We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners, in defiance of all our enemies—we need not fear sin, nor Satan, nor death, nor hell. Our Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name. He for us men, and for our salvation, was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. And he has destroyed them. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. His victory was complete, and in him we conquer. We come after him only to gather up the spoils of his triumph. Through faith in him the sting of death is taken out of the conscience, and thereby the fear of it out of the heart—A believer ought to say, and when he is in his right mind he says with joy and gratitude —"The Lord is my light, and my salvation, what then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid? Yea, though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil —I need not fear any, because thou my Lord and Saviour hast promised to be with

me, thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me." What an infallible antidote has our Jesus here provided against all guilty fears, and against all natural fears? These promises to his dying followers cannot fail. He who made them is almighly to fulfil them; and almighty to enable us to believe, that he will both support and comfort. Jesus wonderful in his person, wonderful in all his works and ways—has changed the very nature of death. He has turned it into life. Whosoever believeth in him shall never die, but is passed already from death unto life. The Holy Spirit has put him into present possession of a life laid up with Christ, out of the reach of death. So that when his body expires, it falls asleep in the Lord, and his spirit enters upon an eternal triumph of life and glory, among the spirits of just men made perfect.

O what a deliverance is this from the bondage of sin, and the terrors of the grave. It is the peculiar blessedness of believers in Jesus: for the natural man cannot but fear death, and look upon it as his enemy. He

has no prospects, but what are bounded by time. His whole happiness is in the present world, and in the enjoyment of what he calls the blessings of it. He was laying fine plans, and hoping to live to execute them—heaping up riches—living in the unrestrained liberty of sensual enjoyments—murdering his time—mispending his talents—without any concern about eternal things—when, lo, an enemy comes, and puts an end to all his schemes. He dies. Perhaps he may be a sceptic, doubting of the certainty of a future state: he may wish there was none, but he can have no evidence: and if he continue to wish it, even to the last, O what a scene will open, when he meets a just and an angry God! He may be a materialist, and please himself with fancying, that what we call his soul, will vanish at his death into soft air: but the God of truth says, That when the dust shall return to the earth, as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it: and in the morning of the resurrection Christ

will reanimate the dust, and body and soul shall be united to live for ever. He may be one of the careless, quite unprepared, but when the messenger arrests him, he must go with him, and that in a moment. Perhaps he may be a moralist, trusting to his own goodness; he may fortify himself with arguments taken from Seneca, but these will furnish him with no armour, proof against the guilt of sin, or the sting of death. He may seek aids from philosophy, falsely so called, but its votaries professing themselves to be wise, in the hour of death found that they were fools. Every human help has failed, when most wanted. "But blessed is he, who hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, and all that therein is, who keepeth his promise for ever." Here is the Christian's never failing support. God, even his covenant God has promised to be with him, and to be his Saviour in death. God Jesus, almighty to keep his promise for ever, is his one hope, living and dying: and he is his gain both in

life and death. If he has won Christ, he has lived to a blessed time, and whenever he dies, Christ will make death his friend, and will reconcile him to his going to the Lord, which is best of all. To look upon death as an enemy, to fear it, as if it could take from us any thing worth keeping, or as if it did not put us into the eternal possession of every thing worth enjoying, these are views of the resurrection of Jesus very dishonourable to his victories, and very injurious to our interest in him. He undertook to conquer death for us, as our surety. He has done it. He has swallowed up death in victory. He has made it our friend and our benefactor: for he has engaged to support us in our last moments. He never did, he never can fail any who put their trust in him. Experience has confirmed his faithfulness in all ages. His soldiers, whom he made valiant in fight, a goodly company whom no one can number, have triumphed gloriously—before death—in death—and after death.

Before death he prepared them to meet it in faith: for the great design of his gospel

is to arm them against the guilt of sin, and the terrors of death. And they are good soldiers of Christ Jesus who put on this armour—who have learnt their exercise, and who by their daily battles keep their arms shining and bright. Looking to Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, for orders, for courage, for strength, for victory, all opposition fall before them. He enables them to fight the good fight of faith, and the more they conquer sin, the less they have to fear from death: for Christ is to them the whole armour of God, and the pieces of this armour are the graces of his Spirit. For with these the apostle says, in Ephesians, chap. vi. that Christ has perfectly equipped the armies of the Lord. They have the truth of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the peace of God in Christ, faith in Christ, the word of Christ, hope in Christ, and prayer to Christ for fresh supplies of his Spirit, that he would enable them to make such a use of their armour, that they might get the victory over sin and death, and he might get all the praise. In this holy war, he is every

thing to them, and they find in him, and receive out of his fulness, whatever they want for the peace of their conscience, and for the happiness of their hearts. Sin is pardoned. Death is conquered. They experience the power of his resurrection, and being passed from death unto life, they have believing views of their own dissolution. We read of their deliverance from the fear of death, and we have examples, of those who were more afraid of sin than of death, yea, who chose to go into a burning fiery furnace, rather than offend their God: hear how they triumphed—"Our God is able to deliver us, but if he does not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Hear the witness of another Christian hero, how he was enabled to look upon death—"The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me: but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with

joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." This was a great victory, but the case is not singular. In the same faith died the noble army of martyrs, of whom we read—"That they overcame the accuser of the brethren by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." And to this day, the Holy Spirit witnesses to the same truth, and seals it upon the consciences of believers in the hour of death. I call one evidence, a great dignity in our Church, a man of great learning, and never suspected of enthusiasm, being near his death he thus expressed himself—"I cannot plead innocency of life, especially of my youth: but I am to be judged by a merciful God, who is not willing to see what I have done amiss: and though of myself I have nothing to present to him, but sins and misery: yet I know he looks not upon me now as I am of myself, but as I am in my Saviour, and hath given me, even at this time, some testimonies by his Holy Spirit,

that I am of the number of his elect: I am therefore full of joy, and shall die in peace."

Thus the precious Jesus was to them in the prospect of death more desirable than life itself. So he was to them in dying. All these died in faith. They were his witnesses, that he kept every thing hurtful from them, and brought them in triumph to the end of their lives. That great company round his throne who are crowned conquerors, testify for him that he did not leave them, nor forsake them one moment. He kept his word with them. He smoothed their bed in their sickness. He was tender over them, and wiped away all tears from their eyes.—When fainting, he gave them strong consolation. When he called them to meet death in all its terrors, to suffer in flames of fire, to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, to be tormented in every way that malice could invent, or the power of tyrants could inflict—he was with them—their Saviour and their God—the tender care of his heart, and the mighty power of his arm, were never more felt than when most wanted. He kept his peace ruling in

their consciences always and by all means, and gave them to feel, that bodily pain could not lessen his love to them, nor abate or stop their love to him.

I might bring a cloud of witnesses to prove the compassion of Jesus to his redeemed in their dying hours; but let these two suffice: Dr. Thomas Goodwin was upon his death-bed, when his friend Mr. Collins came to visit him, and to pray with him, to whom he said—"He rejoiced that he was dying, and going to have a full and uninterrupted communion with God."—"I am going, said he, to the three persons with whom I have had communion: they have taken me, I did not take them. I shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye. All my lusts and corruptions I shall be rid of, which I could not be here."—After mentioning those great examples of faith in Hebrews, chap. xi. he said, "All these died in faith: I could not have imagined I should ever have such a measure of faith as I have in this hour. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No. I have the whole of his righteousness. I am

found in him, not in my own righteousness, which is of the law, but in the righteousness which is of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave himself for me: Christ cannot love me better than he does, and I think I cannot love Christ better than I do: I am swallowed up in God."—The historian remarks, That with this assurance of faith and fulness of joy his soul left this world, and went to see and to enjoy the reality of that blessed state of glory, of which, in a discourse on that subject, he had given a very lively description.

I may be permitted to call another witness to this blessed truth, a believer who just before his death addressed himself to his friends in these words—"My brethren, is not this very amazing to you? When I contemplate the holiness of God, I cannot but cry out, that I myself am vile, most vile: and then when I consider the justice of God, could any one imagine, but that I should be struck with most dreadful apprehensions of approaching judgment and deserved wrath? Instead of that, I am under no fear of the

latter, and much desire the former. I long to appear before this holy just God: I have a righteousness to plead that is perfect. The holy Jesus is my security; and I cannot be disappointed: In Christ the justice of God is as much my security as his mercy. Here is a holiness that transcends that of all the angelic host. There is no charging my Redeemer with possible folly: O, I know I am pardoned for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only Lord and mediator: I am sure of it: I am fully, freely pardoned: I shall soon be thoroughly sanctified and fitted for glory: O, I want words to express my gratitude, to tell my joy. Adored be God, my Lord, my Saviour: this is the work of God alone: O unfathomable love, infinite condescension, unmerited, unbounded grace to a vile offender; I deserve hell: I enjoy heaven."

O thou that readest this honourable mention of the love of Jesus to his dying followers, may it be given thee to find him near to thee in that time of need! If thy faith be in him, doubt not. Take courage, and live up to thy privileges. Regard his pro-

mise. Observe his faithfulness to it. Depend upon his arm. Trust in him, and be not afraid. Since he has overcome death, why shouldest thou fear that it will overcome thee ? Is not his victory thine? Whatever thou feelest in thyself, if nature shrink, and thou hast many uneasy thoughts about thy dissolution; remember that all thy salvation is in, and from him, and he has made thee a free gift of salvation, and of all the things which accompany salvation—he undertook it all—he has finished it all—he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself—he has conquered death. It is now a vanquished foe. In his hand it is the royal way to the kingdom, the only way. Trust him, he will not suffer it to hurt thee. Trust him, and thou wilt find there is nothing in it that ought to frighten thee. Breath may be failing thee, but Jesus will not fail thee. He has pronounced them blessed, he will infallibly make them blessed, who die in the Lord. Only believe, and thou wilt experience, that he has dying consolations for his dying friends. They live in death. He makes

them blessed in dying: yea, sometimes to encourage the faith of others, and to recommend his own grace, he has vouchsafed to give them, at the time of their death, a foretaste of the glory which was just going to be revealed. In this faith they leave the world, casting all their care for time and for eternity, for body and soul, upon him who careth for them. Jesus, into thy hand I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth. I believe in the resurrection of the body: thou hast promised it, and I hope it shall be done unto me according to thy word. Christ is the first fruits, and afterward they that are Christ's at his coming, when he will bring the joyful harvest with him; therefore into his faithful hands I commit my body. I take my leave of it in faith. It is not possible that the grave should hold me, any more than it could him. And I not only hope to be raised from the grave, but I shall be brought out of it in triumph, on that day of wonders, when Jesus Christ, the great God and our Saviour, shall change this my vile body, and shall make it

like unto his own most glorious body. O what a change! O what a miracle! This very body, which is now sinful dust, shall be like the Son of God, who is the standard of all perfection—even this body of mine shall be conformed to his most glorious body; although it be now an house, so infected with the leprosy of sin, that it must be taken down, yet out of its ruins will the Lord raise it a monument to his eternal praise, even an habitation of God by his Spirit. Come then, thou blessed of the Lord, O welcome, welcome death—thou art the smiling messenger from my Jesus, bringing with thee glad tidings of great joy—of a salvation secured from all possible evil, and the enjoyment of all possible good. In sure and certain hope of this complete and eternal salvation, I resign my body into thy hands, thou Lord of life, and giver of glory—I entrust it with thee to be kept against that day, when all that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this prospect, for believing views of it, for the earnest, and for some little foretaste

of it, to the eternal Three be eternal praise. Amen.

Such are the hopes of a real Christian, which he is warranted, which he is commanded to entertain in the hour of death, which God in his infinite grace actually favours his people with to the strengthening of their faith, and to the silencing of unbelievers. Never did he display his faithfulness more signally than in our times. Many instances might be given, but I select one, who thus expressed himself to his friends surrounding his death bed,

"My soul is abundantly comforted and refreshed: my body is dying, but my mind is still vigorous and alive: I feel the cold hand of death is actually upon me; and you may feel it too, if you touch my feet and legs, they are once more clay. Blessed be God, death is no king of terrors to me. He is a welcome messenger, because sent by my heavenly Father. Here I am, O Lord, waiting thy pleasure; ready to obey the summons. Thy will, O Lord, be done. Blessed be God, that the attack is made below:

my head is as yet very clear, and untouched, and till my heart feels the damp, I hope to be engaged in work suitable to a death-bed: It is not to me a bed of languishing or wasting. This poor remainder of a body is hardly capable of any greater decay, till it moulders in the grave; and there let it moulder. Who would not part with it as it is? It is now my burden, my bar to happiness, an hindrance to a lively spiritual communion with God. But, O my friends, it is united to Christ, and shall therefore one day become a glorious body. This corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be for ever with the Lord." Thanks be to God for such a witness—may my latter end be like his.

he looks back and surveys what he was by nature and practice—When he considers what he is now, although he be renewed by grace—And when he looks forward to what he hopes to be at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ—

Every thing in the scripture doctrine, and every thing in scripture experience leads him to conclude—Behold, I am vile, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. So that whenever he is tempted to glory, he has nothing left him to glory in, but the Lord: Self always abased, that Christ alone may be exalted.

When he looks back to what he was by nature, and practice: the more he knows he will be the more deeply humbled, for what he was when under the law, and under sin, and for what he still feels of a body of sin, and of death. He was the creature of God's power, made out of nothing—distinguished by his being in the image of God, and by being capable of communion with him in all the graces and blessings of his love. He was under the best law that could be given him

for promoting God's glory and his own happiness. He was bound to perfect and continual obedience to it, and was left to his own will and power, that he should not offend in any one point. But upon his transgression he became liable to suffer the threatened pains and penalties of the broken law. Every right view of himself in this sate ought to humble and to abase the sinner, and it effectually does, when the conviction is from God. He then finds that his nature was earthly, sensual, and having not the Spirit, it was alienated from the life of God. All his thoughts and actions were not only irregular, but also contrary to the holy law. His very imagination was evil, only evil, and that continually. His understanding was not only ignorant of spiritual things, but was darkness itself. His will was a rebel. His affections apostate, ever at enmity with God. Misery and destruction were in his ways: of the way of peace he had no knowledge, neither was there any fear of God before his eyes. For although death and hell were threatened, and were ready to give him the

just wages of his iniquity, yet he was quite careless and secure. Like the atheists of old, when warned of their approaching destruction by the prophet—"Let us eat and drink, say they, for to-morrow we die."

This true knowledge of the exceeding evil of sin, and the right humiliation for it, come by believing, and are the genuine fruits and effects of it. Legal conviction has guilt and bondage in it, and worketh sorrow unto death. But the conviction of the Holy Spirit reveals the remedy along with the disease, and produces such a repentance as is not to be repented of—a turning from sin to Christ—teaching us practically and daily, what we are in ourselves, and how much we want such an almighty Saviour, to teach us how to trust in him as our great high priest, and to live happy and holy under his government, which is perfect freedom. Every act of this faith is humbling. The believer is made to feel his need of that in himself, which he is commanded to trust in Christ for. And the more he is enabled to depend upon Christ, he will certainly have the less

in himself. And when his whole dependence is as it ought to be, fixed upon Christ, he will come to the apostle's experience, even so to rejoice in Christ Jesus, as to put no confidence in the flesh. Herein consists the triumph of the Christian. In every step of his walk and warfare he is led from self to Christ—kept humbled in his own eyes that he may exalt the Saviour—emptied of self that he may live upon the fulness of Jesus, and may thereby be taught to rest his heart in him at all times, and for all things.

With respect to sin, it is his daily burden, under which he is always sorrowing, yet in Christ he can always rejoice. The more he knows of the exceeding wickedness of sin, the more precious is Jesus, and the more does he value the blood of the Lamb of God, which cleanseth from all sin. In his conscience purged from guilt, he can triumph with exceeding great joy, that there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus: for where sin abounded, grace does much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign

through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. His grateful acknowledgments are such as the following:

I was even as others once—by nature a child of wrath, and an heir of misery—I was going on in the broad way of destruction—careless and secure—and I am quite astonished to see the danger that I was in—I tremble to behold the precipice which I was ready to fall over, when Jesus opened mine eyes, and by the light of his word and Spirit, showed me my guilt and my danger, and put it into my heart to flee from the wrath to come. O what a most merciful escape! I cannot think of it without adoring the compassionate Saviour, who remembered me in my low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever. And hath redeemed me from the hand of all mine enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. Not unto me, not unto me in the least, but to the super-abounding grace of my God be all the glory. That the Father would make me an object of his choice and love—that Jesus Immanuel would humble himself to be manifest in the flesh, and be

obedient unto death, for me and for my salvation—that the Holy Ghost would give me a new birth into the spiritual world, and would quicken me into union with Jesus; and to the enjoyment of the Father's love in him—adored for ever and ever be the holy, blessed and glorious Trinity. That such a filthy sinner should be cleansed from all sin —that such an ungodly creature should be freely justified by grace—that such a miserable sinner should be blessed with all spiritual blessings—that such a weak creature should be strengthened mightily by the spirit in the inner man, and when weakest in myself, then to be strongest in the Lord—O what riches —what unsearchable riches of grace are these! Abide with me, O shou Spirit of the Father and the Son, and keep me constantly dependent on the fresh supplies of thy divine influence. By thy daily teaching keep open to me the depth and mystery of iniquity, the exceeding wickedness of sin— of my sin, that by thy holy inspiration I may live more by faith, and nothing may be suffered to hinder my growing fellowship with

the Father and the Son, until I am admitted to full and eternal fellowship. Amen.

Thus reflecting with self-abhorrence upon what he was by nature, when he was under the law, and under sin, which is the transgression of the law, alive to sin, but dead to God—he is led to consider,

What he is now, although he be renewed by grace, a believer and a man in Christ: How he feels himself, after much and sound experience of his title to salvation, and of his enjoyment of the things which accompany salvation. Every day and in every thing he has fresh matter for the deepest humiliation. He finds, that he still is a man in Adam—still he carries about him a sinful nature, an old man as well as a new, a body of sin with all its members, he has spirit, but he has also flesh, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, nothing but corruption, as that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The old man has flesh still, with all its appetites and lusts: the new man is by the Spirit of life, that is in Christ Jesus, alive to God. In the same person sin dwelleth, as we read,

"When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. And the new man liveth, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The apostle in Romans, chap. vii. not only confesses that he had nature and grace in him at the same time, but also describes it at full length. Indwelling sin was his continual grief, and his heavy burden: an apostle in Christ, and yet he felt the plague of his own heart: and it was his daily cross, which he was forced to bear—and his constant enemy, against which he was always at war—no peace, no truce could be made. The flesh was ever lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two with such unceasing opposition night and day, that he could not do the things that he would, either so continually or so perfectly. He describes this battle as it was carried on in his own experience, the two combatants striving in him for mastery. He was a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and as well in-

structed and armed as ever any believer was for this warfare, having on the whole armour of God, and yet wearied with this daily conflict, he is forced to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He had no deliverance in or from himself, it was against himself that he sought, and of himself he was led to despair. But looking to Jesus he takes courage, assuring himself of a complete victory, and of an everlasting triumph in the Captain of his salvation—I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, (this is the conclusion of the whole matter) so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

This is still the experience of evey true believer, at all times, and upon all occasions. He has a practical comment upon the seventh chapter of the Romans in his own bosom. He has heart-felt experience of the warfare between the flesh and the spirit. He finds it hard fighting; harder, because it is continual—it will never cease so long as flesh

is flesh, that is, so long as the believer lives in the body and in the present world. Indwelling sin never rests—it is like the troubled sea, always casting up its filthy motions, and then the most troublesome when he would be the freest from them. O what humbling lessons does he learn in all his approaches to God: he knows his privileges, and he wishes to live up to them, but he cannot. When he would draw near to God in the prayer of faith, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. On his bended knees desiring to confess his sins, and to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, imploring pardon through the redemption that is in the blood of the Lamb, and expecting it freely, as the most sovereign mercy that a poor sinner can receive. Alas! alas! even then shame and confusion cover his face. He desires to keep his thoughts from wandering, he would have his whole heart engaged in the duty, but he cannot. His imagination is not to be restrained. When he would be uniting all his affections in fervent and effectual prayer—vain, foolish thoughts

force themselves upon him—he drives them away as Abraham did the birds which came down upon the sacrifice, but they will return. He mourns, as well he may, for these distractions of his mind, and is deeply convinced, that a most holy God might justly condemn him for his very best devotions. He is therefore led to put them into the hands of the Mediator, that he may perfume them with much of his incense for their acceptance, and through his intercession, and through that only, he may obtain an answer of grace.

Neither can he trust in his praises any more than in his prayers. Let him praise ever so much, and ever so well, yet he can make no suitable acknowledgments for the blessing of creation. Once he was nothing: for his being at all—for such a being, rather than any other—for being made a man, and at first highly favoured with the image and friendship of God—who can express the noble acts of the Lord, or show forth all his praise for the miracle of creation? But who can conceive how great, how endless are the

blessings of the new creation ? For they are all gifts of God's grace—distinguishing and sovereign—given to sinners as sinners—to the chief of sinners—continued to the unworthy—increased to the unthankful—how great in their nature—how invaluable the sum of them ! The believer deeply impressed with these sentiments acknowledges that he is less than the least of all God's mercies, yea, he is sensible that he deserves the heaviest of the divine vengeance : so that his prayer, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, lays the foundation of his very best praises. He who has most forgiven will love most. He who feels what he really is among the chief of sinners, will be among the chief of those worshippers who ascribe all their salvation to God and the Lamb. The humblest amongst them will feel that they have most reason to be thankful. But still their praises are no payment. They must receive fresh grace to praise with, and more grace to praise better. The debt increases by the addition of fresh gifts of grace, and leaves the believer nothing to glory in but the Lord

—to be saved—to feel it—to enjoy it by faith—to be made, and to be kept thankful, giving all the glory where it is due; these are among the mercies which endure for ever.

In this school of self-abasement he is taught to be humbled for his short attainments in the scriptures, read, or preached, or meditated on. How seldom does he attend the word, as that congregation did—"Behold we are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." This preparation of heart was from the Lord. He disposed Cornelius and his family to receive the word aright, and his blessing came upon them in hearing it; for while Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And it would be so still, if there was the same dependence on his grace, and the prayer of faith for his teaching along with the word. How little is this depended upon under hearing, although the profit be entirely from him. How seldom is the mixing faith with it received and acknowledged,

therefore the memory keeps little impression of the word, and in heart it is not fruitful as it ought to be. On all these accounts the believer mourns and is humbled before God. He feels it to be true, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." He is sensible of these failings and distractions, even when he labours to be most free from them. He is going to the Lord's table to be fed and feasted, hoping that he is one with Christ, and Christ is one with him. He would gladly partake of the fruits and blessings of this union by communion with Christ, by receiving the bread of life, and the cup of salvation, according to Christ's holy institution. He comes in faith to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood, in grateful remembrance of him—according as he hath been taught—The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for me, preserve my body and soul unto eternal life—I take and I eat this bread, and I take and I drink this cup in remem-

brance that Christ died for me, and I desire to feed on him in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. In this service he would have his whole soul engaged, that nothing might interrupt his communion with his beloved. But vain thoughts, which lodge within him, will break out. They intrude, although most unwelcome guests, into this banquet of love. So that he is constrained to cry out, Lord Jesus, pardon the failings of my holy things; I come to the throne of thy grace, that I may obtain mercy, and may find more grace to help me in every time of need.—When he is led to consider what is the cause of all these failings—O what an abiding lesson of humility has he to learn! He sees that they all spring from the bitter root of unbelief, and are the fruits of remaining corruption; which can only be kept down, and conquered, as the strength of Christ apprehended by faith prevails over them. Self, pride, legality, nurse them: they have their being, their activity, their power, from those fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and render the whole life of

the believer one continued act of self-denial. He has still a body of sin, with all its members mixing with every duty, so that he cannot ground his faith and hope upon the best of them. The work of Jesus upon earth, the intercession of Jesus in heaven, are the sole ground of his confidence towards God. His motive is good—he aims at pleasing God in all things, he would do his will, and suffer his will, as it is his bounden duty with faith and patience. His end is good—he would gladly keep the glory of God in his eye, and direct all he does to it, as his elder brethren do in heaven. But he cannot. When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Yet he is not so discouraged as to give over and cease his approaches to God, because of his infirmities. Having obtained help of God he fights on the good fight of faith. He does not leave off praying because he is not so spiritual as he desires to be: But he is rather more earnest and fervent. The Spirit helping his infirmities, keeps him in a humble dependence upon Jesus, waiting on him for a due sense of his wants, for the ac-

ceptance of his prayers, for a supply of them, for pardoning the failings of them, for more faith in them, and for enabling him to continue instant in prayer, according to the divine command, that men ought always to pray and not to faint. This supposes them to be kept in a praying frame, and to use the means which Saint Jude recommends for the obtaining of these blessings, "But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

As he is not weary of his prayers because they are not so spiritual as he could wish: so neither is he weary of his praises, although they fall far short of what such a Saviour deserves, and of what he would acknowledge with all possible gratitude: because he falls short, he aims higher. He feels himself under infinite obligations to the Father for his love, to the Son for his salvation, and by the supply of the Spirit's grace he is made sensible, that he is not on-

ly less than the least of divine mercies, but if he had his just deserts, he should have judgment without mercy. This lays the foundation for his highest praises. The faithful witness for Jesus makes the believer willing to be beholden to him for every mercy; yea, to glory in being a pensioner upon his fulness. From whom he receives grace for grace, that in all things he may be giving of thanks: according to the Lord's favour to his people, informing them to take with them words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." This is the sacrifice of the New Testament worshippers, who through Jesus the mediator offer the sacrifice of praise continually: that is, the fruit of their lips giving thanks to his name, wishing, praying to do it with some of the praises of heaven, as one said, "I will hope continually, and I will yet praise thee more and more."

As these prayers and praises are grounded upon faith in the divine promises, this

makes the believer a diligent reader of the scriptures. He does not neglect his bible, because he has not yet attained the perfect knowledge of every part of it. For that very reason he studies it more: he prays more over it—grows more thankful for the divine power, which still accompanies it, and studies and prays that he may experience more of this power: It has been the means of making him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. He finds it also to be the food of this faith—it nourishes him, and he grows thereby. He hears, reads, meditates, and keeps on praying to the Holy Ghost to write the scriptures upon his heart, and to make his life a fair copy of them. And what he thus learns, preserves him in a settled dependence upon the faithfulness of God to his word and promise. And he is not disappointed: he finds that all the scripture which was given by the inspiration of God is still profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good

works. This blessing he has in his bible. The more he can mix faith with it, the more precious it becomes. His bible is his library. The study therein makes him wise for eternity: which is the superlative excellency of bible knowledge, of which Jesus thus speaks, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watcheth daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors: for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

Thus in the use of means he is kept humble and dependent, exercising the true gospel poverty of spirit in self-abasement, and so far from being stopped that he rather glories and triumphs in his infirmities. The opposition which they give helps him forward, they are always driving him out of self to Christ, teaching him the necessity of the supplies of the Spirit, making him more diligent, and keeping him more humble in the use of the means. And thus he learns to live more by faith upon Christ, and to seek more close communion with him, and

his fulness, especially at his table. He does not absent himself from it, because he has not the fellowship there, so close, intimate, and abiding, as he could wish, or because the last time he was there he was not so lively as he used to be, or because he was unworthy, and full of complaints. He has tasted that the Lord is gracious: and this taste has increased his hunger and thirst, the food which he wants, he does not carry with him, but he goes to receive it. When he hears his Lord's command—Take, eat this bread—drink this cup—do ye this in remembrance of me—he obeys, believing the promise: this is my body given for you: this is my blood shed for you. The more faith in the promise, there will be the more appetite, and the more nourishment received from the spiritual food; for then the Holy Spirit puts his influence into the elements, and the communicant eats the flesh of Christ indeed, and drinks his blood indeed, having by faith communion with him in the bread and wine. At this table the believer is fed, nourished, and feasted with the bread that

cometh down from heaven, even angels' food: for he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. According to the Lord's own promise, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." The believer has this in his eye, both in what the banquet is now, and in what it is the pledge and earnest of, when it shall be realized. Faith gives a substance to the things promised and hoped for. It has the earnest and the pledge of them. As certainly as we have the one, so certainly shall we have the other. A faithful God gives us this security—whoso is one by faith with Jesus shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb: whoso eateth and drinketh at his table here in faith, shall infallibly eat and drink with him at his table in his kingdom of glory. The sure and certain hope of this makes our present feast at the Lord's supper an happy foretaste of that eternal banquet, when he will vouchsafe to admit us to the honours of his table, and of his kingdom. O blessed, most blessed time! The

prospect is animating, it brightens the darkest day of affliction, refreshes the spirits under the heaviest trials, and is a rich cordial under the deepest feeling of indwelling sin. Where Christ is, *all* is blessed. Union with him is heaven begun, and this the believer is called to enjoy: even to enjoy communion with him in all he is and has. Christ is one with him. Christ will not leave him nor forsake him: nothing is able to separate the members from the head. He who has begun the good work has given the fullest security that he will not leave it unfinished. He will carry it on unto the end: for he is faithful who hath promised. And the apostle applies the words spoken to Joshua, and says that they were spoken also to us, that we might trust and not be afraid: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong

and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest." And he went out strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. He fought the Lord's battles, and prospered, until the whole land was subdued before him. There failed not aught of any good thing, which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. Even so shall it be to the whole Israel of God. Every good soldier of Christ Jesus shall be kept safe by his almighty power, and under his banner shall fight the good fight of faith, until he obtains the promised inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. He has taken possession of it in their name, as their surety, and not one of them can perish: for he keeps the inheritance for them, and them for it: yea, the day is hastening on, when he will present all his redeemed unto the Father. "Of those whom thou hast given me have I lost none; behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

On all these accounts it is evident, that a believer every day, and in every thing, finds matter for the deepest humiliation. He has still a body of sin, remaining corruptions, daily infirmities, and short comings. All that he has of his own abases him in his own eyes: so that his triumph is never in himself. His salvation with all its graces and blessings depends entirely upon what he is in Christ. On this foundation he may rest safely always, notwithstanding he has nothing of his own to glory in. Most of his mistakes and miseries come from his seeking to be independent of Christ—hoping to find that in himself, or in the world, which is only in Christ. Self-love is unwilling to be beholden to Christ for every good thing: it is always trying to put some confidence in the flesh: but the believer is commanded, and is taught to deny self—to put it upon the cross—and to crucify it daily with its affections and lusts. As Christ is exalted, self goes down. As Christ is beloved, self is not only denied, but is also abhorred. The prophet Ezekiel in the thirty-sixth chap-

ter describes the very height of the experience of a great believer, who is blest with the abundant graces of the Holy Spirit. The result of which is, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings, that were not good, and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations: not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Such is the genuine working of true grace—it lays the sinner low at the Saviour's feet, abased and humbled to the dust—behold, I am vile—I abhor myself, and I repent in dust and ashes. The sense of God's distinguishing and sovereign mercy brings all high thoughts of self into subjection to Christ Jesus, and teaches the believer to walk humbly with his God, ascribing all his salvation to the praise of the glory of the exceeding riches of God's grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus: that according as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Thus it is evident, that when the believer looks back upon what he was by nature, or considers what he is now by grace, he has nothing of his own to boast of, yet even in this continual warfare between the flesh and the spirit, in Christ Jesus he may rejoice even to a triumph, a jubilee of joy. But the grand triumph is yet to come. The best glorying in the Lord here is only a prelude to it. Now we have the espousals with our heavenly bridegroom, but then the marriage will be consummated. Now we are kept waiting in hope for the crown of righteousness, but that will be our coronation day. What a day will it be! What wonders and miracles! The promises, exceeding great and exceeding precious, will then have their full and everlasting accomplishment by a faithful God, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them who have believed. When they shall see him face to face—shall be with him where he is—shall be like him, and made capable of enjoying the honours, and riches, and pleasures of his kingdom, in their fulness of blessedness for evermore.

CHAP. XI.

The eternal Triumph.

THIS is the great lesson which the believer is learning, till he comes to the end of his faith—what is promised him, and what he hopes to be at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the centre, to which all his experience tends: and while he keeps it in view, it so enlivens and animates his prospect, that come what may, he goes on his way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." And by his holy inspiration he opens the eyes of the understanding, both to understand what is revealed, and also to know the things that are freely given to us of God. For great as they are, endless as they are, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned. But he that is spiritual has spiritual senses given him to exercise upon spiritual things—he is made certain of their reality—his faith gives a substance to the things hoped for, and evidence to the things not seen—an hope that never maketh ashamed—an evidence very clear and satisfying. Sometimes he can triumph in hope of the glory of God, when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in his heart the Father's love, and bestows great joy and peace in believing. But he who is thus taught of God knows only in part. An apostle knew no more. The best of our present enjoyment is only a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. But even this little is of such a nature, and has such efficacy, that when it is truly believed, it influences the whole man, while he looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. They are not seen by the eye of the body, but are visible by the eye of faith; so we read, "Come, taste and see, how gracious the Lord is." By this eye

of faith Moses saw him that is invisible: and this sight so affected him, and had such an influence upon his heart and life, that he lived above the world with all its temptations. This is the victory that overcame the world, even his faith. The same sight still works the same effect—producing a real value for spiritual and eternal things, and forming the heart to love and to practise the apostle's rule—"My conversation is in heaven, from whence also I look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

In the scripture view of our victory in Christ, there are two great points, which will take in all that is revealed of our eternal triumph, namely, the complete conquest of all our enemies—and the full and eternal enjoyment of all possible good. These two truths come now under our consideration; and if we can meditate upon them under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and mix faith with his revelation, we shall have a good warrant to begin those praises, which will

never end, and to sing in harmony with all the redeemed our everlasting jubilee.

When we come to the end of our faith, even the eternal salvation of our souls, our victory is described to be a perfect deliverance from *all* evil—from sin, from suffering. Sin has brought all pain into the world—miseries upon the body—miseries upon the soul—spiritual wickedness—numerous hosts of foes—mighty principalities and powers—it has armed thousands, yea millions of them for our destruction—made us our own enemies by enslaving us to divers lusts and passions, making us the prey to earthly, sensual, devilish tempers—and as if there was not suffering enough in the world, filling us with many imaginary fears, which occasion real suffering. At last come the wages of sin—death with its terrors and hell with its torments. O what a deliverer! what a deliverance! Not one enemy left. They are all brought under and subdued, to rise no more. The Captain of our salvation has vanquished them for us. His victory is the earnest of ours. His was complete, so is ours. No

sin, no suffering can come near the habitation of his holiness. Indeed he suffered once for sin, but he put it away by that sacrifice of himself. By faith we have the benefit of his suffering, a conscience purged from guilt, no condemnation left, no charge from any enemy. God himself justifies, God himself sees us, accepts us, glorifies us, in and with his son : for in that day he will present us to his Father without spot of sin unto eternal salvation.

Of this blessed and complete victory over all sin, and all suffering, the prophet Isaiah had a delightful prospect, speaking of it in these words, " And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and shall come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." O give thanks unto the Lord, Jehovah, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever : let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. They have as much to thank their

ed them he has removed. That death, the wages of which they deserved, he has changed into life. The pillars in his house, which are to go out no more, are thereby delivered from sorrow, and crying, and from every pain. All the former things are passed away—sin is no more—pain is no more. Into the kingdom of Jesus nothing of the old man is suffered to enter: for he creates all things new. The Lord from heaven makes all his people like himself, conformed to his own image in righteousness and true holiness. A more perfect victory cannot be imagined, than to have enemies so vanquished, all enemies, that they shall never have entrance into the kingdom of God and his Christ. When believers shall come to the end of their faith, they shall not only be thus saved from all possible evil, but who can conceive what their actual enjoyments will then be? To be saved from all sin, from all the effects of sin is a great mercy, yet it is only a part of our salvation. But looking at the world lying in wickedness, beholding the variety of pains and miseries in it, from

which no one is exempt—no state of life free from them—the palace as full of them as the cottage—kingdoms convulsed--infidelity spreading its poisonous influence, and attempting to destroy all good order and government—old age bringing its infirmities, and death hastening—it is certainly a great deliverance, that none of those evils can approach us any more. Blessed be God the Saviour for this great mercy. It is through his grace that his kingdom of glory will be kept in perfect peace, no evil, no fear of evil shall for one moment interrupt the happiness of his subjects. But what is this compared to the actual enjoyment of all possible good. Who is able to declare fully what this will be at the appearing of Jesus the great God? We must wait for the full manifestation of the sons of God! But yet there is a great deal revealed, which belongs to us and to our children. And if we can read it in faith, with prayer, and with a continual dependence upon the teaching and application of the Holy Spirit, he will give us to form our

hearts and lives upon the certainty of what he has revealed. For our conversation will then be in heaven, and we shall have both the knowledge, and also the experience of heavenly things, growing according to our faith. The word revelation signifies taking off the veil or covering from any thing, that it may be seen clearly. In the scripture sense it is removing the veil from heavenly things, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, creating spiritual senses to exercise upon those heavenly things: of which the natural man can have no just ideas; for he cannot understand nor receive the things that are freely given to us of God. But he that is taught of God has evidence given him of the reality and of the blessedness of those things, which are revealed, and by faith enjoyed. When such an one reads what God said to Abraham, "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." He reads it for himself: he makes the promise his own, and trusts in it as stedfastly as if God had spoken it

to him by a voice from heaven; for so is he warranted to apply it by the apostle; "now it was not written for his sake alone, but for us also:" no scripture being of any private interpretation. The gift of grace to Abraham was nothing short of an infinite good—for it was God himself: "I will be thy God." What is meant by this relation has been largely treated of in the former volumes. It is only needful to add, that it denotes the relation in which the Holy Trinity stand to believers, and the covenant engagements to them. God is theirs—He is their Father, the Son is their Saviour, the Spirit of life has enabled them to receive the Son, and they are one with him, he dwelling in their hearts by faith, and through him they are one with his Father: As the Lord said in his prayer—"Neither pray I for these alone (the apostles) but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." This prayer was for all the chosen of the Father, given to the Son, re-

deemed by him, and in due time quickened by the Spirit, and brought into the same covenant relation, and partakers of the same covenant blessings, as Abraham was. What was promised to him, was promised to all that walk in the steps of his faith, the whole Family and household of faith—It is as if God had said, Fear not, believer, I myself, Jehovah in Trinity, will be your present salvation to shield you from all sins and enemies, and I myself will be your exceeding great reward. Who can tell what the believer shall then be, when this promise shall be fulfilled? When he shall be brought as near to the God-head, as a creature can possibly be, joined to the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit, an habitation of God through the Spirit, and through Jesus unto the Father, and in this holy and blessed communion, finding an eternal heaven of happiness, an exceeding great reward. When it is received in this its fulness it is a reward, but of grace, a gift of sovereign mercy—great, something worthy of the great God—like himself—exceeding great, eternally great.

O, Holy Ghost, keep the hope of it lively; O make it every day more lively, till, through thy blessing, I come to know it as it is.

The Psalmist speaking of this happiness, suits his description to our present method of understanding spiritual things, as they are imaged to us by material. The pleasures of our senses are made use of to give us ideas of that happiness which is to be found in God: for it is all in him; he is heaven. The enjoyment of him in glory is the heaven of heavens. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness: for thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." All this, great and endless as it is, belongs to them who have God for their God: for when they are admitted into his presence they shall be made like him. O marvellous change—capable of enjoying him, so as to be quite satisfied—finding in him a fulness of joy—pleasures divinely great, abundant,

a river of pleasures—yea a fountain of pleasures springing up into everlasting life. Every sense shall be gratified to the uttermost, and that for evermore. Blessed be God for this unspeakable gift. And has he not herein vouchsafed us matter of triumph? May not the believer, ought he not, to rejoice with exceeding great joy, who has this prospect before him? Who that is out of heaven can have more reason than he has? Survey it, O my soul: take a narrow review of it. Examine over and over again the Psalmist's description of it, and see what can be added to make it absolutely perfect. If nothing can, if it be as full as God can make it, may my heart grow in holy desires after the glory that is to be revealed, and triumph in the God of my salvation.

Our Lord gives us the same description in these words, speaking to his apostles, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me—(in the surest, fullest manner that it can be conveyed)—that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit upon thrones, judging the

twelve tribes of Israel." The king of this holy land is Immanuel—God Jesus: He is the King of kings, the Lord creator of all worlds, and the government of them all is upon his shoulders, and the names of his redeemed are written upon his heart. For them he has made abundant provision, that they may feast with him at his table, and may be receiving out of his fulness every grace that can make them completely and eternally blessed: for they shall sit down with him upon his throne, and shall share with him in all his royalties, blessing and adoring him in their everlasting songs of triumph. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The apostle John calls upon us NOW to begin the heavenly song: and he would have us to do it with the sweetest melody in our hearts, praising our sovereign Lord, who has taken our nature into union with himself, in order that by his Spirit we might be joined to him our glorified head,

and might by faith partake of his holy and heavenly nature. No words can describe more fully the dignity to which by virtue of this union we shall be exalted: nay it is not to be conceived at present how great it will be. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." O what a dignity is this! What upon earth is to be compared for one moment to it—Sons of God—Sons of Adam, who have borne the image of the earthly, advanced to bear the image of the heavenly. This is a glory which surpasseth all understanding. It did not yet appear as it is to the beloved John: he knew as much of it, as perhaps ever man did, but it was far greater than his knowledge. He knew it but in part: he

was indeed sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. But the earnest is not the inheritance itself. It is only a pledge and a security, that at the appearing of Jesus Christ, the great God and our Saviour, we shall be put into full possession. At present we have it in the promise of the God of truth; and faith in his promise begets a hope, that will never make us ashamed: because it will keep us patiently waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, when we shall come to the eternal enjoyment of all the riches, and pleasures, and honours of our sonship with Christ our glorified Head.

The apostle would lead us also to consider the fountain from whence all this blessedness springs, from the Father—what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. The love expressed by this name, Father, has no parallel. It had no beginning, and it will have no ending. It is from everlasting to everlasting—bringing with it

out of its infinite ocean all the streams of grace, which make glad the city of God, and never stopping till it return with all the happy objects of his love to the same great ocean again. The apostle would have us to behold, and to admire the miracles of the Father's love, which he purposed and wrought out, and bestowed upon us, who are sinners even as others, and yet to the everlasting praise and glory of his grace—chosen—called—effectually brought into the family and household of faith by the spirit of adoption, and ennobled—sons of God—what an exaltation—what a blessedness! Made the children of God—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ—with him who is Lord of all—admitted to share with him in his kingdom, his crown, his glories. According to his own prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou has given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory," may be with me, may be like me. O what an animating view is here for the highest rejoicing of faith and hope! Christ by taking our nature into union with himself

has advanced it into the greatest dignity of which it is capable: for it is heaven to be with him, where he is in his glory; like him, conformed to that standard of all perfection in body and soul, perfectly and eternally. What a hope should this beget and cherish, even a hope full of glory and immortality! Especially as all this honour is according to the Father's covenant purposes: for whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren: moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say to these things? Can there be greater grace shown from the God of all grace? Can there be higher honour conferred, than to be so exalted from the depth of sin and misery, as to be raised to the honours of sonship, even to a conformity to the Son of God. O what sentiments had that blessed man of it, when he said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied

when I awake after thy likeness; for thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Conformity to Jesus brings with it this fulness of joy; and the hope of it is an active and a lively grace: for every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as Christ is pure. This is the mark at which the believer aims, he wishes to be like Christ, and to be more like him: he would feel more of the power of the cross of Christ to crucify in him the body of sin, and more of the power of the risen Jesus, that there may be a real growth into him, and that in all things. Thus he purifies his heart and life by that faith in Jesus, of which the apostle thus speaks, "Brethren, I have not yet attained what I am striving for; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

These are some of the scripture authorities, from which this conclusion may be fairly drawn, that a believer, whatever view he may take of himself, either from what he was, when dead in trespasses and sins, or from what he now is, quickened by the Spirit of Christ, and living by faith, yet crying out under a sense of his corruptions, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me; yet he may thank God through Jesus Christ his Lord. For he is warranted, he is commanded to rejoice in the Lord always, and to triumph in the God of his salvation. And he has enough given him in hand to exercise that strong faith, which will administer strong consolation, even great, very great joy and peace in believing. For the word of God cannot be broken, his promises cannot fail, his covenant engagements are immutable, given as infallible security to the believer, that his faith may not stagger at any difficulty, but looking to a faithful God he may go on his way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

These are some of the blessed effects of looking to Jesus, and living by faith upon him and his fulness. In this way there is continual matter of triumph. Let the believer look back on what he was by nature, or on what he is now in his renewed state by grace, or looking forward to the glory that is to be revealed at the appearing of his Saviour, when he shall be with him in the kingdom which cannot be moved, and shall be like him, all his members conformed to their most glorious Head, and partaking of his divine riches, and honours, and pleasures, what upon earth can exceed such a prospect! What can administer greater happiness, than to have the evidence of it kept clear and open! What can make life more comfortable, and the end of our faith more desirable, than such great and blessed things! promised and given most freely in time, yea, in the fullest manner that almighty love can bestow them in eternity.

For such mercies bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.

O thou beginning and ending, the first and the last, the author and the finisher of the faith, Jehovah Jesus, I have been looking up to thee for thy divine teaching, and I am still looking up to thee for thy divine blessing on this my offering. It is a poor mite, which I would cast into thy treasury, as my dying testimony for the truth and for the power of thy gospel. Be pleased to accept it out of thine infinite condescension. Thou knowest the heart of thy servant: whatever is right in it is thine own, the work of thine own grace. Failings there are, and they are mine: of thy mercy pardon them. And make use of this little treatise, as it shall seem best to thy godly wisdom, for the increase of faith in thy church, and for the advancement of thine own fame and glory; that more honour may be put upon thy word, more dependence exercised upon thy faithfulness, and there may be a growing conformity to it in the hearts and lives of thy people. Be pleased, merciful Saviour, to accompany the reading of it with thy Spirit for these purposes, and I shall be amply reward-

ed. May thy grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all. Amen.

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